MEDITATIONS & READINGS
FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

VOLUME II.—PART II.

EASTER :: ASCENSION

Edited by Rev. J. B. Coyle, C.SS.R.

VISITS TO THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT and TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, with Prayers for Mass, Preparation for Communion, Thanksgiving, etc. By ST. ALPHONSUS. From 2/6 to 5/-.

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Meditations and Readings

FOR

EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

Selected from the Spiritual Writings of

SAINT ALPHONSUS

Doctor of the Church and Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

VOLUME TWO.
PART II.

Edited by

JOHN BAPT. COYLE, C.SS.R.

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LETTER FROM HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL LOGUE TO THE EDITOR.

ARA COELI,
ARMAGH,
16th March, 1924.

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

I have put off writing to thank you for your interesting and edifying volume, *Meditations and Readings for Every Day of the Year*, till I should find time to look through it. I have done so now, and I can congratulate you on undertaking a very useful work; and I hope you will be spared till you complete it.

The Ascetic Works of St. Alphonsus have done wonders in conveying solid instruction, nourishing piety, and exciting fervour among the people in every state and stage of life. They have been an ever enduring source of piety, especially in inspiring love of our Holy Redeemer and tender devotion to His Blessed Mother. It is a question whether his great Theological Works have contributed more to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Hence it was not without regret I noticed that these Spiritual Works were not so common among the people as they were in my early days. They seemed to be giving place to more showy and more superficial modern works which are far from breathing the fervent spirit of the great Doctor and Saint. One of the chief fruits which I expect from the work you have undertaken is the redress of this serious spiritual loss.

You have commenced well, and I trust you will be able to continue till the Spiritual Works of St. Alphonsus are again as extensively circulated among the people as they were in the past. The scheme you have sketched

out for yourself will familiarize the people with the beauty and fervour of St. Alphonsus' Works, and from using your volumes for casual reading they will be likely to drink more deeply of the source of fervour the Saint has opened up to them.

Wishing you every blessing and success in your useful work,

I am,

Dear Father Coyle,

Yours gratefully,

✠ MICHAEL CARDINAL LOGUE.

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL O'DONNELL writes:

It is a pleasure to me to subscribe my name to the beautiful letter written by my lamented predecessor, his Eminence Cardinal Logue, to commend Father Coyle's publications from the Spiritual Works of St. Alphonsus Liguori.

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL O'DONNELL,
Archbishop of Armagh.

Armagh, 20th February, 1926.

J.M.J.A.T. SANT' ALFONSO — VIA MERULANA.
ROMA,

23rd *October*, 1923.

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

I am very glad to hear that you have the first part of your "Meditations and Readings for every Day of the Year from the Writings of St. Alphonsus" ready for publication, and I wish this and the succeeding Volumes every success. It is difficult to exaggerate the value of these "Meditations and Readings" as is seen from the following statements of two Popes :

His Holiness Pope Pius IX., in speaking of the writings of St. Alphonsus, wrote : "The works of this most holy and learned man, written with extraordinary tender piety and devotion, breathe in every page a great love for Jesus Christ and great confidence in His mercy and merits. They also inspire their readers with the most ardent devotion to the Virgin Mother of God and to the Saints, and they inflame the hearts of men with the desire of receiving the Sacraments, as well as furnish a most abundant supply of excellent admonitions, counsels and directions to those who labour for the salvation of souls."

Pope Benedict XV. also wrote recently, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Doctorate of St. Alphonsus, that the excellence and utility of his teaching are becoming every day more apparent, and that his writings are helpful, not only to Theologians and Professors of the Sacred Sciences, but also to the faithful of every condition of life, to whom he points out the way to solid virtue, and smoothes for them the way to the highest Christian perfection. His Holiness adds that the Saint's one great ambition in all his writings was to make known to all men the infinite amiability of Jesus Christ.

It is unnecessary for me to add anything to these words of two Popes. I wish only to say that this infinite amiability of Jesus Christ is particularly well shown in the present volume, for, in addition to the Meditations and Readings on the Religious State and on other subjects, there are given about forty Meditations on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, in which are contained some of the most beautiful and devotional pages written by the Saint. Moreover the division of the ascetic writings of the Saint into two Meditations and a Spiritual Reading for every day of the year, and this arranged in such a way as not to interrupt the sequence of any work of the Saint, will please many, both in the Cloister and in the world, who desire to know and follow in their spiritual life the teachings of this great Doctor of the Church and Director of Souls.

In conclusion, in the name of St. Alphonsus, I bless you and these Meditations and Readings with the hope that they may be everywhere known and read and well thought on so that all may know the infinite amiability and mercy of Jesus Christ and the unspeakable amiability and mercy of His Blessed Mother, and that they may thus seek and love and serve Them alone.

Your devoted servant and confrère,

PATRICK MURRAY, C.SS.R.,

Sup. Gen. and Rector Major.

Rev. J. B. Coyle, C.SS.R.,
St. Joseph's,
Dundalk.

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MEDITATIONS AND READINGS

Easter Sunday

Morning Meditation.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

Let us rejoice at seeing in His risen glory our Saviour, our Father, the best Friend we possess. Let us rejoice, too, for our own sakes, because the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is for us a sure pledge of our own resurrection and of the glory we hope one day to have in Heaven in our soul and body.

I.

Jesus came into the world not only to redeem us, but by His example to teach us all virtues, and especially humility, and holy poverty which is inseparably united with humility. For this it was, He chose to be born in a cave; to live as a poor man in a workshop for thirty years; and at last to die, poor and naked, on a Cross, seeing His garments divided amongst the soldiers before He breathed His last; while, after His death, He receives the winding-sheet for His burial as an alms from others.

Let the poor be consoled at seeing Jesus Christ, the King of Heaven and earth, thus living and dying in poverty in order to enrich us with His merits and gifts. *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich he became poor for your sakes, that through his poverty you might be rich*—(2 Cor. viii. 9). For this cause the Saints, in order to become like unto Jesus in

His poverty, despised all earthly riches and honours, so that one day they might go to enjoy with Jesus Christ the riches and honours prepared by God in Heaven for them that love Him. And speaking of these blessings the Apostle St. Paul says that *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love him*—(1 Cor. ii. 9).

O my Jesus, I beseech Thee by Thy Resurrection, make me rise glorious with Thee on the last day, to be always united with Thee in Heaven, to praise Thee and to love Thee for ever.

II.

Jesus Christ, then, rose from the dead with the glory of possessing all power in Heaven and on earth, not only as God, but as Man. All the angels and all men are therefore subject to Him. Let us rejoice in thus seeing in glory our Saviour, our Father, and the best Friend we possess.

And let us rejoice for ourselves, because the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is for us a sure pledge of our own Resurrection, and of the glory that we may hope one day to have in Heaven in our soul and in our body. This hope gave courage to the Martyrs to suffer with gladness all the evils of life, and the most cruel torments of tyrants. We must rest assured, however, that none will rejoice with Jesus Christ but they who are willing to suffer in this world with Him; nor will he obtain the crown who does not fight as he ought to fight. *He that striveth for the mastery is not crowned except he strive lawfully.* —(2 Tim. ii. 5). At the same time let us be assured by what the same Apostle says: that all the sufferings of this life are short and light in comparison with the boundless and eternal joys we hope to enjoy in Paradise. —(2 Cor. iv. 17). Let us labour the more to continue in the grace of God, and continually to pray for perseverance in God's friendship. Without continual prayer we shall not obtain perseverance, and without perseverance we shall not be saved.

O sweet Jesus, worthy of all love, how hast Thou so loved men that, in order to show Thy love, Thou hast

not refused to die wounded and dishonoured on an infamous tree! O my God, how is it there are so few among men who love Thee with their whole heart? O my dear Redeemer, I wish to be one of these few. Miserable that I am to have forgotten Thy love in the past, and given up Thy grace for miserable pleasures! I know the evil I have done. I grieve over it with my whole heart and would wish to die of grief. O my beloved Redeemer, I love Thee now more than myself and am ready to die a thousand deaths rather than lose Thy friendship. Jesus, I thank Thee for the light Thou hast given me. O Jesus, my Hope, leave me not in my own hands. Help me until death.

O Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Spiritual Reading.

THE HEAVEN GOD HAS WON FOR US.

The bliss of Heaven consists in seeing and loving God face to face. "Everything we expect," says St. Augustine, "is expressed in a word of one syllable, namely, *God*." The reward God promises to us does not consist altogether in the beauty, the harmony, and other advantages of the city of Paradise. God Himself, Whom the Saints are allowed to behold, is, according to the promises made to Abraham, the principal reward of the just in Heaven. *I am thy reward exceeding great.*—(Gen. xv. 1). St. Augustine asserts that were God to show His face to the damned, "hell would be instantly changed into a paradise of delights." And he adds that were a departed soul allowed the choice of seeing God and suffering the pains of hell, or of being freed from these pains and deprived of the sight of God, "it would prefer to see God, and to endure those torments."

The delights of the soul infinitely surpass all the pleasures of the senses. Even in this life, Divine love infuses such sweetness into the soul when God communicates Himself to it that the body is raised from the

earth. St. Peter of Alcantara once fell into such an ecstasy of love that, taking hold of a tree, he drew it up from the roots, and raised it with him on high. So great is the sweetness of Divine love, that the holy Martyrs, in the midst of their torments, felt no pain, but were on the contrary filled with joy. Hence St. Augustine says that when St. Laurence was laid on a red-hot gridiron, the fervour of Divine love made him insensible to the burning heat of the fire. Even on sinners who weep for their sins, God bestows consolations which exceed all earthly pleasures. Hence St. Bernard says : " If it be so sweet to weep for Thee, what must it be to rejoice in Thee !"

How great is the sweetness which a soul experiences when, in the time of prayer, God, by a ray of His own light, reveals to it His goodness and His mercies towards it, and particularly the love Jesus Christ has borne to it in His Passion ! It feels its heart melting and, as it were, dissolved through love. But in this life we do not see God as He really is : we see Him, as it were, in the dark. *We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face.*—(1 Cor. xiii. 12). Here below God is hidden from our view ; we can see Him only with the eyes of Faith. How great shall be our happiness when the veil is raised, and we are permitted to behold God face to face ! We shall then see His beauty, His greatness, His perfection, His amiableness, and His immense love for our souls.

Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred.—(Eccles. ix. 1). The fear of not loving God, and of not being loved by Him, is the greatest affliction which souls that love God endure on the earth ; but in Heaven the soul is certain that it loves God and that He loves it ; and sees that the Lord embraces it with infinite love, and that this love shall not be dissolved for all eternity. The knowledge of the love Jesus Christ has shown it in offering Himself in sacrifice for it on the Cross, and in making Himself its Food in the Sacrament of the Altar, shall increase the ardour of its love. It shall also see clearly all the graces God has bestowed upon it, all the helps which He has given it, to preserve it from falling into sin, and to draw it to His love.

It shall see that all the tribulations, the poverty, the infirmities and persecutions which it regards as misfortunes, have all proceeded from love, and have been the means employed by Divine Providence to bring it to glory. It shall see all the lights, loving calls, and mercies which God had granted to it after it had insulted Him by its sins. From the blessed mountain of Paradise it shall see so many souls damned for fewer sins than it had committed, and shall see that it is saved and secured against the possibility of ever losing God.

Justly, then, has St. Augustine said that to gain the eternal bliss and peace of Paradise, we should embrace eternal labour.

Evening Meditation.

"YOUR SORROW SHALL BE TURNED INTO JOY."

I.

Oh, happy are we, if we suffer with patience on earth the troubles of this present life! Distress of circumstances, fears, bodily infirmities, persecutions, and crosses of every kind, will one day all come to an end; and if we be saved, they will all become for us subjects of joy and glory in Paradise: *Your sorrow*, says the Saviour to encourage us, *shall be turned into joy*.—(John xvi. 20). So great are the delights of Paradise that they can neither be explained nor understood by us mortals: *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him*.—(1 Cor. ii. 9). Beauties like to the beauties of Paradise, eye hath never seen; harmonies like unto the harmonies of Paradise, ear hath never heard; nor hath ever human heart gained the comprehension of the joys God hath prepared for those that love Him. Beautiful is the sight of a landscape adorned with hills, plains, woods, and views of the sea. Beautiful is the sight of a garden abounding with fruits, flowers, and fountains. Oh, how much more beautiful is Paradise!

To understand how great the joys of Paradise are, it is

enough to know that in that blessed realm resides a God omnipotent, Whose care it is to render happy His beloved souls. St. Bernard says that Paradise is a place where "there is nothing thou wouldst not, and everything thou wouldst." There thou shalt not find any thing displeasing to thyself, and every thing thou dost desire thou shalt find: "There is nothing thou wouldst not." In Paradise there is no night; no seasons of winter and summer; but one perpetual day of unvaried serenity, and one perpetual spring of unvaried delight. No more persecutions or jealousies are there; for there all sincerely love one another, and each rejoices in each other's good as if it were his own. No more bodily infirmities or pains are there, for the body is no longer subject to suffering; no poverty is there, for every one is rich to the full, not having anything more to desire; no more fears are there, for the soul being confirmed in grace can sin no more, nor lose that supreme good which it possesses.

II.

"There is everything thou wouldst." In Paradise thou shalt have whatsoever thou desirest. There the sight is satisfied in beholding that city so beautiful, and its citizens all clothed in royal apparel, for they are all kings of that everlasting kingdom. There shall we see the beauty of Mary, whose appearance will be more beautiful than that of all the Angels and Saints together. We shall see the beauty of Jesus, which will immeasurably surpass the beauty of Mary. The smell will be satisfied with the perfumes of Paradise. The hearing will be satisfied with the harmonies of Heaven, and the canticles of the Blessed, who will all with ravishing sweetness sing the Divine praises for all eternity. Ah, my God, I deserve not Paradise, but hell; yet Thy death gives me a hope of obtaining it. I desire and ask Paradise of Thee, not so much in order to enjoy as in order to love Thee for ever, secure that it will never more be possible for me to lose Thee. O Mary, my Mother, O Star of the Sea, it is for thee, by thy prayers, to conduct me to Paradise.

Monday—Easter Week

Morning Meditation.

THE LOVE OF JESUS IN DYING FOR US.

Jesus died for us that by His love for us He might gain the entire dominion of our hearts. *For to this end,* wrote St. Paul, *Christ died and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.*—(Rom. xiv. 9). Contemplating the death of Jesus Christ, and the love with which He died for men, the Saints esteemed it little to forfeit for His sake, property, honours, and life itself.

I.

Who could have conceived that the Son of God, the Lord of the Universe, to show His love for us, would suffer and die upon the Cross, if He had not really done so? With reason did Moses and Elias on Mount Tabor speak of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ as of an *excess.* —(Luke ix. 31). And what could be greater excess of love than for the Creator to die for His creatures?

To make Thee an adequate return for Thy love, my dear Redeemer, it would be necessary for another God to die for Thee. It would therefore be but little, it would be nothing, were we poor miserable worms of the earth to give up our whole lives for Thee, Who hast given Thine for us.

What should still more excite us to love Him is the ardent desire with which, through the course of His life, He longed for the hour of His death. By this desire He indeed proved how great His love was for us. *I have a baptism,* He said, *wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished*—(Luke xii. 50). I must be baptized with the Baptism of My own

Blood, to wash away the sins of men, and how am I dying with the desire of My bitter Passion and Death! My soul, lift up your eyes, and behold your Lord hanging upon a disgraceful Cross; behold the Blood which trickles down from His Wounds. Behold His mangled body, all inviting you to love Him. Your Redeemer in His sufferings would have you love Him at least through compassion.

O Jesus, Thou didst not refuse me Thy life and precious Blood, and shall I refuse Thee anything that Thou requirest of me? No, Thou hast given Thyself to me without reserve. I will give myself to Thee without reserve.

II.

St. Francis de Sales, speaking of these words of the Apostle, *The charity of Christ presseth us*—(2 Cor. v. 14), says: "Knowing that Jesus Christ, being true God, has loved us even to the laying-down of His life for us, and this upon a Cross, do we not feel our hearts as it were in a press, forcibly straitened, and love pressed from them by a violence which is the more powerful as it is the more amiable?" And he adds: "Why, therefore, do we not cast ourselves upon Jesus Christ crucified, to die on the Cross for the love of Him Who has willingly died upon the Cross for the love of us? I will cling to Him, should we say, and will never abandon Him; I will die with Him, and be consumed in the fire of His love. My Jesus has given Himself entirely to me, and I will give myself entirely to Him. I will live and die upon His bosom; neither life nor death shall ever separate me from Him. O Eternal Love, my soul seeks Thee and espouses Thee forever!"

Spiritual Reading.

THE HAPPY LIFE OF THOSE WHO LOVE GOD.

Justice and peace have kissed—(Ps. lxxxiv. 11). Peace resides in every soul in which justice dwells.

Hence David said: *Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the requests of thy heart.*—(Ps. xxxvi. 4). To understand these words we must consider that worldlings seek to satisfy the desires of their hearts with the goods of this earth; but, because these cannot make them happy, their hearts continually make fresh demands; and how much soever they may acquire of these goods, they are not content. Hence the Prophet says: *Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the requests of thy heart.* Give up creatures, seek your delight in God, and He will satisfy all the cravings of your heart.

This is what happened to St. Augustine, who, as long as he sought happiness in creatures, never enjoyed peace; but, as soon as he renounced them and gave to God all the affections of his heart, he exclaimed: "All things are hard, O Lord, and Thou alone art repose." As if he had said: Ah, Lord! I now know my folly. I expected to find felicity in earthly pleasures; but now I know that they are only vanity and affliction of spirit, and that Thou alone art the peace and joy of our hearts.

The Apostle says that the peace which God gives to those who love Him surpasses all the sensual delights a man can enjoy on this earth. *The peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding.*—(Phil. iv. 7). St. Francis of Assisi, in saying "My God and my All!" experienced on this earth an anticipation of Paradise. St. Francis Xavier, in the midst of his labours in India for the glory of Jesus Christ, was so replenished with Divine consolations, that he would exclaim: "Enough, O Lord! Enough!" Where, I ask, has any lover of this world been found, so satisfied with the possession of worldly goods as to say: Enough, O world, enough; no more riches, no more honours, no more applause, no more pleasures? Ah, no! worldlings are constantly seeking after higher honours, greater riches, and new delights; but the more they have of them, the less are their desires satisfied, and the greater their disquietude.

It is necessary to persuade ourselves of this truth, that God alone can give content. Worldlings do not wish to be convinced of it, through an apprehension that, if they give themselves to God, they will lead a

life of bitterness and discontent. But with the Royal Prophet, I say to them: *O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet.*—(Ps. xxxiii. 9). Why, O sinners, will you despise and regard as miserable that life which you have not as yet tried? *O taste and see.* Begin to make a trial of it; hear Mass every day; practise Mental Prayer and the Visit to the Most Holy Sacrament; go to Communion at least once a week; fly from evil conversations; walk always with God; and you shall see that, by such a life, you will enjoy that sweetness and peace which the world, with all its delights, has not hitherto been able to give you.

Evening Meditation.

THOU SHALT BE CROWNED.

I.

Let us imagine to ourselves a soul which, on departing out of this world, enters into eternity in the grace of God. All full of humility and of confidence, it presents itself before Jesus, its Judge and Saviour. Jesus embraces it, gives it His benediction, and causes it to hear these words of sweetness: *Come, my spouse, come! Thou shalt be crowned!* If the soul have need of being purified, He sends it to Purgatory, and, all resigned, it embraces the chastisement, because itself wishes not to enter into Heaven, that land of purity, if it is not wholly purified. The Guardian Angel comes to conduct it to Purgatory; it first returns him thanks for the assistance he has rendered it in its lifetime, and then obediently follows him. Ah, my God, when will that day arrive on which I shall see myself out of this world of perils, secure of never being able to lose Thee any more? Yes, willingly will I go to the Purgatory which shall be mine; joyfully will I embrace all its pains; sufficient will it be for me in that fire to love Thee with all my heart, since there I shall love none else but Thee.

II.

The purgation over, the Angel will return and say to the soul : Come, beautiful soul, the punishment is over; come, and enjoy the Presence of thy God Who is awaiting thee in Paradise. Behold, the soul now passes beyond the clouds, passes beyond the spheres and the stars, and enters into Heaven. O God, what will it say on entering into that beautiful country, and casting its first glance on that city of delights? The Angels and Saints, and especially its own holy advocates, will go to meet it, and with jubilation will they welcome it, saying, Welcome, O companion of our own! Welcome! Ah, my Jesus, do Thou make me worthy of it.

What consolation will the soul not feel in there meeting with relations and friends of its own who have previously entered into Heaven! But greater by far will be its joy in beholding Mary its Queen, and in kissing her feet, and thanking her for the many kindnesses she has done it. The Queen will embrace it, and will herself present it unto Jesus, Who will receive it as a spouse. And Jesus will then present it to His Divine Father, Who will embrace and bless it, saying : *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* And thus will He beatify it with the same beatitude He Himself enjoys. Ah, my God, make me love Thee exceedingly in this life, that I may love Thee exceedingly in eternity. Thou art the object most worthy of being loved; Thou dost deserve all my love; I will love none but Thee. Do Thou help me by Thy grace. And, Mary, my Mother, be thou my protectress.

Tuesday—Easter Week

Morning Meditation.

"YOU ARE BOUGHT WITH A GREAT PRICE."

We ought to set a higher value on the soul than on all the goods of the earth. To be convinced of this truth

it is enough to know that God Himself condemned His Divine Son to death in order to save our souls. And the Eternal Word has not refused to purchase them with His own Blood. *For God so loved the world as to give his only begotten son . . . that the world may be saved by him.*—(John iii. 16, 17).

I.

The business of eternal salvation is for us the most important of all affairs; but it is also the most neglected by Christians. They are diligent, and lose no time in seeking to gain a lawsuit, or a situation of emolument. How many measures are taken to attain these objects! How many means adopted! They neither eat nor sleep. And what efforts do they make to secure their eternal salvation? How do they live? To save their souls the greater number of Christians do nothing; on the contrary, they do everything to bring their souls to perdition; they live as if *Death*, *Judgment*, *Hell*, *Heaven*, and *Eternity* were not Truths of Faith, but fables invented by the poets. If a person lose a lawsuit, or a harvest crop, how great is his pain and distress of mind! With what zeal does he labour to repair the loss! If worldlings lose a horse, or a dog, with what diligence do they seek after it? But if they lose the grace of God, they sleep, and jest, and laugh. All blush at being told that they neglect their worldly affairs, but how few are ashamed to neglect the business of eternity, which is the most important of all. The worldling says that the Saints were truly wise, because they sought only the salvation of their souls; and still he himself attends to all worldly business, and utterly neglects the concerns of the soul. *But we entreat you, brethren*, says St. Paul, *that you do your own business.*—(1 Thess. iv. 10, 11).

Ah, my God, how have I spent so many years, which Thou hast given me in order to secure my eternal salvation? Thou, my Redeemer, hast purchased my soul with Thy Blood, and hast consigned it to me that I may attend to its salvation; and I have laboured only for its perdition by offending Thee Who hast loved me so tenderly. I thank Thee for giving me time to be able to

repair the great loss I have suffered. I have lost my soul and Thy grace. Lord, I am sorry with my whole heart for my past offences, and I resolve, henceforth, to lose everything, even my life, rather than forfeit Thy friendship.

II.

Salvation is the most *important* affair, because if the soul be lost, all is lost. We ought to set a higher value on the soul than on all the goods of the earth. "The soul," says St. Chrysostom, "is more precious than the whole world." To be convinced of this truth it is enough to know that God Himself condemned His Son to death in order to save our souls. The Eternal Word has not refused to purchase them with His own Blood. Hence a holy Father says that man appears to be of as much value as God. And Jesus Christ has asked: *What exchange shall a man give for his soul?*—(Matt. xvi. 26). *For God so loved the world as to give his only begotten son.*—(John iii. 16). If, then, such is the value of the soul, for what earthly good shall a man exchange and lose it?

St. Philip Neri with reason could say that he who does not attend to the salvation of his soul is a fool. Were there on this earth two classes of men, one mortal and the other immortal, and were the former to see the latter seeking after the things of this world, its honours, goods, and amusements, they should certainly exclaim: O fools that you are! You have it in your power to acquire eternal riches, and do you fix your thoughts on those miserable and transitory things? Will you, for these, condemn yourselves to an eternity of torments in the next life? Leave us, for whom all shall end at death, leave us to seek after these earthly goods! But no; we are all immortal. How then does it happen that so many lose their souls for the miserable pleasures of this life? How does it come to pass, says Salvian, that Christians believe in Judgment, Hell, and Eternity, and still live as if they feared them not?

I love Thee above all things, and I resolve always to love Thee, my Sovereign Good, Who art worthy of infinite love. Assist me, my Jesus, that this purpose

may not be like my past resolutions to which I have been always unfaithful. Take me out of life rather than suffer me ever again to offend Thee, or ever to cease to love Thee. O Mary, my hope after Jesus, save me by obtaining for me holy perseverance.

Spiritual Reading.

CONFESSION.

I.—IMPORTANCE OF FREQUENT CONFESSION.

I do not intend to treat in this place of the Confessions of those who commit mortal sins, although I shall say something on proximate occasions and on sacrilegious Confessions; but I will principally speak of the Confessions of timorous souls that love perfection and endeavour constantly to purify their souls more and more from the stain of venial sins.

Cesarius relates that a good priest commanded, in the Name of God, a devil who appeared to him, to tell what was most hurtful to him. The demon answered that nothing was more injurious or displeasing to him than frequent Confession. Jesus Christ once said to St. Bridget, that they who wish to preserve fervour should often purify their souls by accusing themselves in Confession of all their defects, and all their negligence in His service. Cassian says that he who aspires to perfection should aim at great purity of conscience; because from purity of conscience the soul passes to perfect love. Hence love corresponds to cleanness of heart. It is, however, necessary to know that in the present state this purity of soul does not consist in a total exemption from all faults; for except our Divine Saviour and His Divine Mother, there neither has been nor will be in this world, any soul free from all stain. *In many things we all offend.*—(James iii. 2). But it consists in two things: first, in a careful guard over the heart, to prevent the commission of every deliberate sin, however venial; and

secondly, in instantly purifying the soul from any fault that it may commit. Now these two are precisely the fruits of frequent Confession.

In the first place, Confession cleanses the soul from the stains it contracts. St. John Climacus relates that a young man, in order to discontinue the scandalous life that he led in the world, went to a Monastery in order to become a Religious. Before his admission the Abbot told him that if he wished to be received, he must make a public confession of all his sins. The young man, who was sincerely resolved to give himself to God, readily obeyed; and behold, while he confessed his faults in the presence of the monks, a holy Religious who was among them saw a man of venerable aspect cancel from a written paper that he held in his hand, every sin the penitent confessed, so that at the end of the Confession all his sins were cancelled. Now, what then took place in a visible manner, happens invisibly to every one that confesses his sins with the requisite dispositions.

Confession not only washes away the stains of the soul, but it also gives it strength against relapse. The angelic Doctor teaches that the virtue of Penance not only destroys the fault that has been committed, but also prevents it from budding forth again. In his Life of St. Malachy, St. Bernard relates that there was a certain woman who was so much given to impatience and to anger that she became insupportable. Hearing from her that she had never confessed her impatience, St. Malachy induced her to make a Confession of all her sins of anger. St. Bernard states that after her Confession she became so meek and patient that she appeared incapable of resenting any injury or insult that she received.

Hence, to acquire purity of conscience, many Saints confessed their sins every day. Such was the practice of St. Catharine of Sienna, of St. Bridget, of Blessed Colletta, of St. Charles Borromeo, of St. Ignatius of Loyola, and of many others. St. Francis Borgia went to Confession even twice a day. If worldlings cannot bear to appear before those whom they love with a stain on the countenance, what wonder is it that souls that love God should endeavour always to purify themselves more and more, in order to render themselves more pleasing

in the eyes of their beloved Lord! Now, I do not intend to require of those who practise frequent Communion to go to Confession every time they communicate; but it is right that they should go to Confession twice or at least once a week, and also when they have committed any deliberate fault.

Evening Meditation.

SEEING AND ENJOYING GOD FOR EVER.

I.

The beauty of the Saints, the heavenly music, and the other delights of Paradise, form but the lesser portion of its treasures. That which gives to the soul its fulness of bliss is seeing a loving God face to face. St. Augustine says that were God to let His beautiful Face be seen by the damned, hell, with all its torments, would become to them a paradise. Even in this world, when God gives a soul in prayer a taste of His sweet Presence, and by a ray of light discovers to it His goodness, and the love He bears it, so great is the contentment that the soul feels itself dissolve and melt away in love; and yet, in this life, it is not possible for us to see God as He is; we behold Him obscured, as if through a thick veil. What, then, will it be, when God will take away that veil from before us, and cause us to behold Him face to face, openly? O Lord, for having turned my back upon Thee no more should I be worthy to behold Thee; but, relying on Thy goodness, I hope to see Thee, and to love Thee in Paradise for ever. I speak thus, because I am speaking with a God Who has died in order to give Paradise to me.

Although the souls that love God are the happiest in this world, yet they cannot, here below, enjoy a happiness full and complete; that fear, which arises from not knowing whether they be deserving of the love or the hatred of their beloved Saviour, keeps them, as it were, in perpetual suffering. But in Paradise the soul is cer-

tain that it loves God, and is loved by God; and it sees that that sweet tie of love which holds it united with God will never be loosened throughout all eternity. The flames of its love will be increased by the clearer knowledge the soul will then possess of what the love of God has been in being made Man, and having willed to die for it; and in having, moreover, given Himself to it in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Its love will be increased by then beholding, in all their distinctness, the graces He has given it, in order to lead it to Heaven; it will see that the crosses sent to it in lifetime have all been artifices of His love to render it happy. It will see, besides, the mercies He has granted it, the many lights and calls to penance. From the summit of that blessed Mount will it behold the many lost souls now in hell for sins less than its own, and it will behold itself now saved, possessed of God, and certain that it can never more lose Him throughout all eternity. My Jesus, my Jesus, when will that too happy day for me arrive?

II.

The happiness of the blessed soul will be perfected by knowing with absolute certainty that that God Whom it then enjoys, it will be able to enjoy for all eternity. Were there to be any fear in the Blessed that they might lose that God Whom they now enjoy, Paradise would be Paradise no longer. But no; the blessed soul is certain with the certainty which it has of the existence of God, that that supreme Good which it enjoys, it will enjoy for ever. That joy, moreover, will not grow less with time; it will be ever new. The blessed one will be ever happy, and ever thirsting for that happiness; and, while ever thirsting, will be ever satiated.

When, therefore, we see ourselves afflicted with the troubles of life, let us lift up our eyes unto Heaven, and console ourselves by saying: Paradise! The sufferings will one day come to an end; nay, they will themselves become objects over which to rejoice. The Saints await us; the Angels await us; Mary awaits us: and Jesus stands with the crown in His hand wherewith to crown us, if we shall be faithful to Him. Ah, my God, when

will that day come on which I shall arrive at possessing Thee, and be able to say unto Thee : My Love, I cannot lose Thee more ! O Mary, my hope, never cease from praying for me, until thou seest me safe at thy feet in Paradise !

Wednesday—Easter Week

Morning Meditation.

" THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH THY WHOLE HEART "

For to this end Christ died and rose again, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and of the living. —(Rom. xiv. 9). The Saints, contemplating the death of Jesus Christ, thought it little to give their life and all things for the love of so loving a God. How many Martyrs have sacrificed their lives for Him ! How many tender Virgins, renouncing the nuptials of the great, have gone with joy to death to make some return for the affection of a God Who died for their sake ! And what have you done for Jesus' sake ?

I.

But one thing is necessary.—(Luke x. 42). What is this *one thing necessary* ? It is not necessary to acquire riches, nor to obtain dignities, nor to gain a great name. The only thing necessary is to love God. Whatever is not done for the love of God is lost. This is the greatest and the First Commandment of the Divine Law. To the Pharisee who asked which was the great Commandment of the Law, Jesus Christ answered : *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart . . . This is the greatest and first commandment.*—(Matt. xxii. 37, 38). But this, the greatest of the commandments, is

the most despised by men : there are few who fulfil it. The greater part of men love relatives, friends, and even brute animals, but do not love God. Of these St. John says that they have not life—that they are dead. *He that loveth not abideth in death*—(1 Jo. iii. 14). St. Bernard says that the reward of a soul is estimated by the measure of her love for God.

Let us consider, then, how dear to us should be this command to love God with our whole heart. What object more noble, more magnificent, more powerful, more rich, more beautiful, more bountiful, more merciful, more grateful, more amiable, or more loving than Himself could God give us to love?

Who more *noble* than God? Some boast of a family nobility of five hundred or a thousand years; but the nobility of God our Father is eternal. He is the Lord of all. Before God all the Angels in Heaven, and all the nobles on earth are but as a drop of water or a grain of dust. *Behold the Gentiles are but as a drop of a bucket —behold the islands are as a little dust*—(Is. xl. 15).

Who more *powerful* than God? He can do whatsoever He wills. By an act of His will He created this world, and by another act He can destroy it when He pleases.

Who more *wealthy*? He possesses all the riches of Heaven and earth.

Who more *beautiful*? Before the beauty of God all the beauties of creatures fade away.

Who more *bountiful*? St. Augustine says that God has a greater desire to do good to us than we have to receive it.

Who more *merciful*? If the most impious sinner on earth humble himself before God, and repent of his sins, God instantly pardons and embraces him.

Who more *grateful*? He does not leave unrewarded the smallest act we perform for His sake.

Who more *amiable*? God is so amiable that, by barely seeing and loving Him in Heaven, the Saints feel a joy which makes them perfectly happy and content for all eternity. The greatest of the torments of the damned arises from knowing that this God is so amiable, and that they cannot love Him.

O Infinite Goodness! O Infinite Love! My enamoured

Jesus, fill my heart with Thy love so that I may forget myself, and think of nothing but of loving and pleasing Thee. I now consecrate to Thee my body, my soul, my will, my liberty. Till now I have sought to gratify myself to Thy great displeasure. I am exceedingly sorry, my crucified Love. I will henceforth seek nothing but Thee, my God and my All.

II.

And who is more *loving* than God? In the Old Law men might doubt whether God loved them with a tender love; but, after seeing Him die on a Cross for us, how can we doubt the tenderness and the ardent affection with which He loves us? Let us raise our eyes and look at Jesus, the true Son of God, fastened with nails to a gibbet, and let us consider the intensity of the love which He bears us. That Cross, those Wounds, says St. Bernard, cry out, and proclaim to us that He truly loves us. And what more could He do to convince us of His great love than to lead a life of sorrow for thirty-three years, and afterwards die in torments on the infamous tree of the Cross, in order to wash away our sins with His own Blood? *Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered himself up for us.*—(Ephes. v. 2). *Who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* —(Apoc. i. 5). "How," says St. Philip Neri, "is it possible for him who believes in God to love anything but God?" Contemplating God's love towards men, St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi began one day to ring the bell, saying that she wished to invite all nations of the earth to love so loving a God. St. Francis de Sales used to say with tears: "To love our God it would be necessary to have an infinite love; and we throw away our love on vain, contemptible things."

Alas, my Jesus, how many times have I renounced Thy friendship and made myself a slave of Satan, dishonouring Thy Infinite Majesty! I grieve above all things for having so grievously insulted Thee. Ah, my God, bind my will to Thy feet with the sweet cords of Thy holy love, that it may wish for nothing but what

pleases Thee. May I take Thy Will as the sole guide of my life. I renounce everything. Thou alone art sufficient for me.

Spiritual Reading.

CONFESSION.

II.—EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

Every one knows that for a good Confession three things are necessary: an Examination of Conscience, Sorrow, and the Purpose to Avoid Sin.

As to the *examination of conscience*, for those that frequent the Sacraments, it is not necessary to distress the head by efforts to find out all the minute circumstances of venial sins. I would rather see such persons careful to discover the causes and roots of their attachments and tepidity. Some there are who have the same story to tell, and recite the same faults without sorrow, and without any thought of amendment.

For spiritual souls that go frequently to Confession, and guard against deliberate venial sins, it is not necessary to spend a long time in the examination of conscience. With regard to grievous sins, they need not scrutinize the conscience, for had they committed any mortal sin, they would know it without examination. With regard to venial sins, if they have been fully deliberate, they, too, by the remorse that they cause, would make themselves known to the soul. Besides, there is no obligation of confessing all our venial transgressions; consequently we are not obliged to make a strict search after them, and much less after the number, the circumstance, the manner, or the causes of them; it is enough to confess those that are most grievous, and most opposed to perfection, and to tell the rest in general terms. And when you have not certain matter for the Sacrament, tell some sin of your past life for which you have great sorrow; and say, for example: I accuse myself in a special manner of all the faults I have committed in my past life against Charity, Purity, or

Obedience. How consoling is the doctrine of St. Francis de Sales on this point. "Be not troubled," he says, "if you do not remember all your little faults at Confession; for as you often fall imperceptibly, so you are often raised up imperceptibly," that is, by the acts of love, or by the other good acts that devout souls are accustomed to perform.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.—HOW DESERVING JESUS CHRIST IS OF OUR LOVE ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN HIS PASSION.

I.

The whole sanctity and perfection of a soul consists in loving Jesus Christ our God, our sovereign Good, and our Redeemer. Whoever loves Me, says Jesus Christ Himself, shall be loved by My Eternal Father: *The Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me.*—(John xvi. 27). Some, says St. Francis de Sales, make perfection consist in an austere life; others in prayer; others in frequenting the Sacraments; others in alms-deeds. But they deceive themselves: perfection consists in loving God with our whole heart. The Apostle wrote: *Above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection.*—(Col. iii. 14). It is charity which keeps united and preserves all the virtues that render a man perfect. Hence St. Augustine said: "Love God, and do whatever you please"; because a soul which loves God is taught by that same love never to do anything that will displease Him, and to leave nothing undone that may please Him.

But perhaps God does not deserve all our love? *I have loved thee with an everlasting love.*—(Jer. xxxi. 3). O man, says the Lord, behold I was the first to love thee. Thou wast not yet in the world, nay, the world itself was not, and I already loved thee. As long as I am God, I love thee; as long as I have loved Myself, I have also

loved thee. With good reason, therefore, did St. Agnes, that young holy virgin, reply to those who wished to unite her to an earthly spouse : " I am engaged to another Lover." " Go," said she, " O lovers of this world, cease to ask my love; my God was the first to love me. He has loved me from all eternity : it is but just, then, for me to give Him all my affections, and to love none other but Him."

II.

As Almighty God knew that man is won by kindness, He determined to lavish His gifts upon him, and so take captive the affections of his heart. For this reason He said : *I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love*—(Osee, xi. 4). I will catch men by those very snares by which they are naturally caught, that is, by the snares of love. And such exactly are all the favours of God to man. After having given him a soul created to His own image, with memory, understanding, and will, and a body with its senses, He created Heaven and earth for him; yes, all that exists, all for the love of man,—the firmament, the stars, the planets, the seas, the rivers, the fountains, the hills, the plains, metals, fruits, and a countless variety of animals : and all these God made that they might minister to the uses of man, and that man might love Him in gratitude for so many admirable gifts. " The heavens and the earth and all things tell me to love Thee," says St. Augustine. " My Lord," he said, " whatever I behold on the earth, or above the earth, all speak to me and exhort me to love Thee; because all assure me that Thou hast made them for the love of me." The Abbot de Rancé, founder of La Trappe, when from his hermitage he stood and surveyed the hills, the fountains, the birds, the flowers, the planets, and the skies, felt himself animated by each one of these creatures to love that God Who had created all through love for him.

Thursday—Easter Week

Morning Meditation.

"SHE IS AN INFINITE TREASURE TO MEN."

The earth, the heavens, and all nature with astonishment beheld Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, the Lord of the Universe, die of intense pain and anguish, on a disgraceful Cross—and why? *He hath loved us and hath delivered himself for us*—(Eph. v. 2). And do men believe this and not love God?

I.

O inestimable value of Divine love which makes us rich before God! It is the treasure by which we gain His friendship. *She is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God*—(Wis. vii. 14). The only thing we ought to fear, says St. Gregory of Nyssa, is the loss of God's friendship; and the only object of our desires should be its attainment. It is love that obtains the friendship of God. Hence, according to St. Laurence Justinian, by love the poor become rich, and without love the rich are poor. "No greater riches than to have charity. With charity the poor man is rich, and without charity the rich man is poor."

How great is the joy a person feels in thinking he is loved by a man of exalted rank! But how much greater must be the consolation a soul derives from the conviction that God loves her! *I love them that love me*—(Prov. viii. 17). In a soul that loves God the Three Persons of the Adorable Trinity dwell. *If any one love me he will keep my word; and my Father will love him; and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him*—(John xiv. 23). St. Bernard writes that among all the virtues charity is the one that

unites us to God. St. Catharine of Bologna used to say that love is the golden chain that binds the soul to God. St. Augustine says that "love is a link connecting the lover with the beloved." Hence were God not immense, where should He be found? Find a soul that loves God, and there God is certainly found. Of this St. John assures us. *He that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him*—(1 Jo. iv. 16). A poor man loves riches, but he does not therefore enjoy them; he may love a throne, but he does not therefore possess a kingdom. But the man that loves God possesses God. *He abideth in God and God in him.*

It is true, O my Jesus, that I am so wretched as to have often offended Thee after so many special lights and graces. I am no longer worthy to be consumed in those blessed flames with which the Saints are inflamed. I ought rather to burn in hell fire. But Thou dost command me to love Thee, and I will obey Thee. I will love Thee, Jesus, with my whole heart.

II.

St. Thomas says that love draws in its train all other virtues, and directs them all to unite us more closely to God. Hence, because from charity all virtues are born, St. Laurence Justinian called it *the mother of all virtues.* Hence St. Augustine used to say: "Love, and do what you wish." He that loves God can only do what is good; if he does evil he shows that he has ceased to love God. And when he ceases to love God, all things can profit him nothing. If, said the Apostle, I gave all my possessions to the poor, and my body to the flames, and have not charity, I am nothing. *And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing*—(1 Cor. xiii. 3).

Love also prevents us from feeling the pains of this life. St. Bonaventure says that the love of God is like honey; it sweetens the bitterest things. And what more sweet to a soul that loves God than to suffer for Him? She knows that by cheerfully embracing sufferings she pleases God, and that her pains shall be the brightest

jewels in her crown in Paradise. And who is there that will not willingly suffer and die in imitation of Jesus Christ, Who has gone before us, carrying His Cross, to offer Himself in sacrifice for the love of us, and inviting us to follow His example. *If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me*—(Matt. xvi. 24). For this purpose He has condescended to humble Himself to death, and to the opprobrious death of the Cross, for the love of us. *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross*—(Phil. ii. 8).

O Jesus, I have believed all this, and yet not only have I not loved Thee, but I have frequently offended Thee. Pardon me, I beseech Thee, and keep me ever mindful of the death Thou hast suffered for me, that I may never more offend Thee, but may always love Thee. Holy Mary, Mother of God, enable me to love Jesus: this is the only favour I ask of thee.

Spiritual Reading.

CONFESSION.

III.—CONTRITION.

In the second place, *sorrow* is necessary; this is the principal condition necessary for obtaining the pardon of sins. The most *sorrowful*, not the *longest* Confessions, are the best. The proof of a good Confession is found, says St. Gregory, not in the multitude of the words of the penitent, but in true compunction of heart. But let those who go frequently to Confession, and abhor even venial faults, banish all doubts regarding the sincerity of their sorrow. Some are troubled because they do not *feel* sorrow; they wish to shed tears, and to feel a tender sorrow every time they receive the Sacrament of Penance; and, because with all their efforts they are unable to excite this tender sorrow, they feel always uneasy about their Confessions. But you must be per-

suaded that true sorrow consists not in feeling it, but in wishing for it. All the merit of virtue is in the will; hence, speaking of the Virtue of Faith, Gerson has said that sometimes a person who wishes to believe has more merit than another who believes. Speaking of sorrow, St. Thomas says that the essential sorrow necessary for Confession is a displeasure at having committed sin; and this sorrow is not in the sensitive part of the soul, but in the will; for sensible sorrow is an effect of the displeasure of the will, which effect we are not always able to produce, because the inferior part does not always follow and obey the superior part of the soul. Whenever the will is displeased, above all things, at having committed sin, the Confession is a good one.

Be careful to abstain from forced efforts to excite sensible sorrow. Remember that, with regard to interior acts, the best are those that we perform with the least violence, and with the greatest sweetness; for the Holy Ghost ordereth *all things sweetly and peacefully*—(Wis. viii. 1). Hence the holy penitent Ezechias said of the sorrow that he felt for his sins: *Behold in peace is my bitterness most bitter*—(Is. xxxviii. 17). He felt great sorrow, but it was accompanied with peace.

When you wish to receive absolution, be careful in your preparation for Confession, first to ask of Jesus Christ, and of the sorrowful Mother Mary, a true sorrow for your sins. Make afterwards, as has been already said, a short examination of conscience, and then as to the sorrow, it is enough for you to say with sincerity:

My God, I love Thee above all things; I hope, through the Blood of Jesus Christ, for the pardon of all my sins, for which I am sorry with my whole heart, because by them I have offended and displeased Thine infinite Goodness; I abhor them above every evil, and I unite my abhorrence of them to the abhorrence that Jesus had for them in the Garden of Gethsemani. I purpose, with Thy grace, never more to offend Thee.

And as often as you have sincerely wished to make these acts, go in peace to receive absolution, without fear or scruple. St. Teresa gave another excellent means of removing anxiety about sorrow for sins. "See," said the Saint, "whether you have a sincere

purpose not to commit the sins that you confess; if you have, doubt not that you also have true sorrow."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

II.—HOW DESERVING JESUS CHRIST IS OF OUR LOVE ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN HIS PASSION.

I.

St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, when she held any beautiful flower in her hand, was enkindled by the sight of it with love for God, and would say: "And God, then, has thought from all eternity of creating this flower for love of me!" Thus did that flower become, as it were, a dart of love, which sweetly wounded her, and united her more and more to her God. On the other hand, St. Teresa, at the sight of trees, fountains, rivers, lakes, or meadows, declared that all these fair things upbraided her for her ingratitude in loving so coldly a God Who created them that they might draw her to His love. To the like purpose it is related of a pious hermit, that when walking through the country, it seemed to him the plants and flowers in his pathway reproached him for the cold return of love he made to God; so that he went along gently striking them with his staff, and saying to them: "Oh, be silent, be silent! You call me an ungrateful wretch; you tell me God has made you for love of me, and yet I do not love Him; but now I understand you, be silent, be silent; do not reproach me more."

II.

But God was not satisfied with giving us so many beautiful creatures. He has gone to such lengths to gain our love, as to give us Himself. The Eternal Father did not hesitate to give us even His only-begotten Son: *For God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son*—(John iii. 16). When the Eternal Father saw that

we were all dead, and deprived of His grace by sin, what did He do? For the immense love, nay, as the Apostle writes, for the *exceeding* love He bore us, He sent His beloved Son to make atonement for us; and so restore to us that life of which sin had robbed us: *Who through his exceeding charity with which he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ*—(Eph. ii. 4, 5). And in granting us His Son (not sparing His Son, that He might spare us), He has granted us every good together with Him, His grace, His love and Paradise, since assuredly all these gifts are much less than that of His Son: *He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also with him, given us all things?*—(Rom. viii. 32).

Friday—Easter Week

(First Friday of April)

Morning Meditation.

"THE CLEFTS OF THE ROCK."

Oh, what a safe place of refuge shall we not find in the sacred "clefts of the rock," that is to say, in the Wounds of Jesus Christ? "The clefts of the rock," says St. Peter Damian, "are the Redeemer's Wounds; in these my soul has placed its hope."

I.

There is no means which can more surely kindle in us Divine love than to consider the Passion of Jesus Christ. St. Bonaventure says that the Wounds of Jesus Christ, because they are Wounds of love, are darts which wound

hearts the most hard, and flames which set on fire souls the most cold : " O Wounds, wounding stony hearts, and inflaming frozen minds !" It is impossible that a soul which believes and thinks on the Passion of the Lord should offend Him and not love Him, nay, rather that it should not run into a holy madness of love, at seeing a God as it were mad for love of us : " We have seen," says St. Laurence Justinian, " Wisdom infatuated by too much love." Hence it is that the Gentiles, as the Apostle says, when hearing him preach the Passion of Jesus crucified, thought it a folly : *We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews indeed a scandal, but to the Gentiles foolishness*—(1 Cor. i. 23). How is it possible, said they, that a God, almighty and most happy, such as He Who is preached to us, could have been willing to die for His creatures ?

Ah, my Jesus, if I gaze upon Thy body, without I see only Wounds and Blood. If within in Thy Heart, I find nothing but bitterness and anguish which make Thee suffer the agonies of death. Ah, God enamoured of men, how is it possible that goodness so great, and such a love, should remain so badly corresponded to by men ? It is wont to be said that love is repaid by love ; but Thy love —with what manner of love can it be ever repaid ? It would be necessary that a God should die for Thee to make recompense for the love which Thou hast borne towards us in dying for us. O Cross, O Wounds, O Death of Jesus, you bind me closely to love my loving Jesus !

II.

Behold your Redeemer expiring, and with His dying breath saying : *It is consummated* (John xix. 30). As if He had said : O men, all has been completed and done for your redemption. Love Me, then, since I have nothing more that I can do to make you love Me. My soul, look up at thy Jesus Who is now going to die. Look at those eyes growing dim, that face grown pale, that Heart which is beating with languid pulse, that Body which is now abandoning itself to death : and look at that beautiful Soul which is just on the point of forsaking that Sacred Body. The heavens are darkened, the earth

trembles, the sepulchres are opened; signs that now the Maker of the world is about to die. Lo, at last, Jesus, after having commended His Blessed Soul to His Father, first giving a deep sigh from His afflicted Heart, and then bowing His head in sign of the offering of His life, which at this moment He renewed for our salvation, at length, by the violence of His sorrow, expires and renders up His Spirit into the hands of His beloved Father.

Approach, my soul, to this holy Cross. Embrace the feet of thy dead Saviour, and think that He is dead through the love which He bore to thee. Ah, my Jesus, to what has Thy affection towards me reduced Thee? And who, more than I, has enjoyed the fruits of Thy death? Make me, I beseech Thee, understand what love that must have been that a God should die for me, to the end that from this day forth I may love none other than Thee. I love Thee, O greatest Good; O true Lover of my soul, into Thy hands I here commend it. I beseech Thee, by the merits of Thy death, make me to die to all earthly loves, in order that I may love Thee alone, Who art alone worthy of all my love. Mary, my hope, pray to Jesus for me.

Hail, Jesus, our Love, and Mary, our hope!
"O riven Heart, O Love for me now crucified!
Give to my soul repose within Thy wounded side!"

Spiritual Reading.

CONFESSION.

IV.—PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT—FIRM, UNIVERSAL, EFFICACIOUS.

In the third place, a purpose to sin no more is necessary for a good Confession; and this purpose must be *firm*, *universal*, and *efficacious*.

First, it must be *firm*. Some say: I would wish never more to commit this sin: I would wish never more to offend God. Alas! this expression, *I would wish*; denotes that the purpose is not firm. In order to have

a firm purpose, you must say with a resolute will: *I will never more commit this sin: I will never more deliberately offend God.*

Secondly, it must be *universal.* The penitent must purpose to avoid all sins without exception, that is, all mortal sins. With regard to venial sins, it is sufficient for the validity of the Sacrament to have sorrow for one species of them, and to have a firm purpose to avoid it. Spiritual souls should purpose to avoid all deliberate venial sins; and with regard to indeliberate venial sins, it is enough to resolve to guard against them according to the best of their ability; for it is impossible to avoid all indeliberate sins.

Thirdly, the purpose of avoiding sin must be *efficacious*; that is, it must make the penitent adopt the means of not relapsing into the sins that he confesses, and must make him avoid the proximate occasions of a relapse. An occasion is called proximate in which a person has frequently fallen into grievous sin, or has been, without a just cause, an occasion of sin to others. It is not enough for penitents to purpose merely to renounce sin: it is necessary also to resolve to remove the occasion of it; otherwise all their confessions, though they should receive a thousand absolutions, will be invalid: for not to remove the proximate occasion of mortal sin is in itself a mortal sin. And, as I have already shown in my *Moral Theology* (Lib. 6, n. 454), he that receives absolution without a firm purpose of removing the proximate occasion of mortal sins, commits a new mortal sin, and is guilty of sacrilege.

But some one may say: If I separate from such a person, if I give up such a familiarity, scandal will be the consequence, and it will be an occasion of talk. I answer: You are wrong; you will, on the contrary, give scandal by not removing the occasion, to those who are aware of the friendship; and be assured, that although they may not speak in your presence, they think your conduct deserving of blame. But you will say: To separate from such a one would be an act of incivility, and even of ingratitude, for such a one assists, serves me, and relieves me. Yes, such a one helps to remove

you from God, and to make you lead an unhappy life here, and a more unhappy life hereafter. Is it incivility or ingratitude to avoid such a person?

Civility and gratitude are first due to Jesus Christ, Who is a Sovereign of infinite Majesty, and from Whom we have received immense benefits. Do you not then see that it is passion makes you speak in this manner, and makes you seek pretexts in order to bring you to eternal perdition? Ah! give no more pain to the Heart of Jesus Christ. To St. Ludgard, while she was miserably entangled in a dangerous friendship, Jesus appeared, and showed her His Heart grievously wounded. The Saint began to weep over her fault, and took leave of her friend, saying that she could love no other than Jesus Christ, to Whom she had been espoused. Thenceforward she consecrated herself entirely to the love of her Spouse, and became a Saint.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

III.—HOW DESERVING JESUS CHRIST IS OF OUR LOVE ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN HIS PASSION.

I.

The Divine Son of God, through His love towards us, has given Himself wholly to us: *Who loved me, and delivered himself for me*—(Gal. ii. 20). In order to redeem us from everlasting death, and to recover for us the Divine grace and Heaven which we had forfeited, He became Man, and assumed flesh like our own: *Et verbum caro factum est*; *And the word was made flesh*. Behold, then, a God reduced to nothingness: *But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant . . . and in habit found as a man*—(Philipp. ii. 7). Behold the Sovereign Lord of the world humbling Himself so low as to subject Himself to all the miseries which the rest of men endure.

But what is more astonishing still is that He could

very well have saved us without dying and without suffering at all; and yet He chose a life of sorrow and contempt, and a death of bitterness and ignominy even so far as to expire on a Cross—the gibbet of infamy, the award of vilest criminals: *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross*—(Philipp. ii. 8). But why, if He could have ransomed us without suffering, why should He choose to die, and to die on a Cross? To show us how He loved us. *Who loved me, and delivered himself for me.* He loved us, and because He loved us He delivered Himself up to sorrows, and ignominies, and to a death more cruel than ever any man endured in this world.

II.

That great lover of Jesus Christ, St. Paul, has written: *The charity of Christ presseth us*—(2 Cor. v. 14); wishing to show us by these words that it is not so much the sufferings themselves of Jesus Christ as His love in enduring them that obliges us and, as it were, constrains us to love Him. Let us hear what St. Francis de Sales says on this text: "When we remember that Jesus Christ, true God, has loved us to such an excess as to suffer death, and the death of the Cross for us, our hearts are, as it were, put in a wine-press, and suffer violence, until love be extorted from them; but a violence which, the stronger it is, becomes the more delightful." He then goes on to say: "Ah! why do we not therefore cast ourselves on Jesus crucified, to die on the Cross with Him, Who has chosen to die for love of us? I will hold Him, we should say, and I will never let Him go; I will die with Him, and will be consumed in the flames of His love. One flame shall consume this Divine Creator and His miserable creature. My Jesus gives Himself unreservedly to me, and I will give myself unreservedly to Him. I will live and die on His loving Breast; neither life nor death shall ever separate me from Him. O eternal Love, my soul longs after Thee, and makes choice of Thee for ever! Come, O Holy Spirit, and inflame our hearts with love. O love, O death, to die to all other loves, to live solely to that of

Jesus Christ! O Redeemer of our souls, grant that we may eternally sing: 'Live, Jesus! I love Jesus; live, Jesus, Whom I love! Yes, I love Jesus, Who reigns for evermore.'"

Saturday—Easter Week

Morning Meditation.

THE LOVE OF MARY'S HEART FOR GOD.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart. In Mary Divine love was so ardent that well might even the Seraphim have descended from Heaven to learn in the heart of Mary how to love God.

I.

St. Anselm says that "wherever there is the greatest purity, there is also the greatest charity." The more a heart is pure, and empty of itself, the greater is the fullness of its love towards God. The most holy Mary, because she was all humility, and had nothing of self in her, was filled with Divine love, so that "her love towards God surpassed that of all men and Angels," as St. Bernardine writes. Therefore St. Francis de Sales with reason called her "the Queen of love."

God has indeed given men the precept to love Him with their whole heart: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart*—(Matt. xxii. 37); but, as St. Thomas declares, "this commandment will be fully and and perfectly fulfilled by men only in Heaven, and not on earth, where it is only fulfilled imperfectly." On this subject Blessed Albert the Great remarks, that, in a certain sense, it would have been unbecoming had God given a precept that was never to have been perfectly fulfilled. But this would have been the case had not the

Divine Mother perfectly fulfilled it. The Saint says: "Either some one fulfilled this precept, or no one; if any one, it must have been the most Blessed Virgin." Richard of St. Victor confirms this opinion, saying: "The Mother of our Emmanuel practised virtues in their very highest perfection. Who has ever fulfilled as she did that first commandment, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart*? In her Divine love was so ardent that no defect of any kind could have access to her." "Divine love," says St. Bernard, "so penetrated and filled the soul of Mary, that no part of her was left untouched; so that she loved with her whole heart, with her whole soul, with her whole strength, and was full of grace." Therefore Mary could well say: My Beloved has given Himself all to me, and I have given myself all to Him: *My Beloved to me, and I to him*—(Cant. ii. 16). "Ah! well might even the Seraphim," says Richard, "have descended from Heaven to learn, in the heart of Mary, how to love God."

O Mary, my Mother, thou desirest nothing else but to see Jesus loved; do thou obtain for me this grace above all others. I do not ask of thee for earthly goods, or honours, or riches. I ask for what thy own heart desires most for me. I wish to love my God.

II.

God, Who is love, came on earth to enkindle in the hearts of all the flame of His Divine charity; but in no heart did He enkindle it so much as in that of His Mother; for her heart was entirely pure from all earthly affections, and fully prepared to burn with this blessed flame. Thus St. Sophronius says that "Divine love so inflamed her that nothing earthly could enter her affections; she was always burning with this heavenly flame, and, so to say, inebriated with it." Hence the heart of Mary became all fire and flames, as we read of her in the sacred Canticles: *The lamps thereof are fire and flame*—(Cant. viii. 6); fire burning within through love, as St. Anselm explains it; and flames shining without by the example she gave to all in the practice of virtues. When Mary, then, was in this world, and

bore Jesus in her arms, she could well be called, "fire carrying fire"; and with far more reason than the woman spoken of by Hippocrates, who was thus called because she carried fire in her hand. Yes, for St. Ildephonsus said that "the Holy Ghost heated, inflamed, and melted Mary with love, as the fire does iron; so that the flame of the Holy Spirit was seen, and nothing was felt but the fire of the love of God." St. Thomas of Villanova says that the bush seen by Moses, which burnt without being consumed, was a real symbol of Mary's heart. Therefore with reason, says St. Bernard, was she seen by St. John clothed with the sun: *and there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun*—(Apoc. xii. 1); "for," continues the Saint, "*she was so closely united to God by love*, and penetrated so deeply the abyss of Divine wisdom, that, without a personal union with God, it would seem impossible for a creature to have a closer union with Him."

O most beautiful Mary, O most amiable Mary, thou hast gained the Heart of God! Take also my heart, and make me a saint. I love thee. In thee is my confidence. Most amiable Mother, pray for me.

Spiritual Reading.

CONFESSION.

V.—FALSE SHAME.

O God, how many souls shall, on account of this accursed shame, burn and burn forever in the very depths of hell! Some Christians, through human respect, and through fear of losing the esteem of others, easily continue for months and years to make sacrilegious Confessions and Communions. In the Chronicles of the Discalced Carmelites it is related that a young girl of great virtue consented to a sin against chastity; she concealed the sin three times in Confession, and went to Communion; after the third Communion she

suddenly fell dead. Because she was regarded as a Saint her body was laid in a particular part of the church of the Jesuits; but after the obsequies were finished, and the Church closed, the confessor was conducted by two Angels to the place of interment; she came forth, fell on her knees, and threw from her mouth into a chalice prepared for them, the three consecrated Hosts which had been sacrilegiously received, and miraculously preserved in her breast. The Angels stripped her of the scapular; the miserable girl instantly presented a horrible aspect, and was carried out of sight by two devils.

But how can a Christian that has been so daring as to sin grievously against the Divine Majesty, and has thus merited hell, where he should suffer eternal shame, find an excuse before God for concealing a sin in Confession, in order to avoid the momentary and trifling confusion that would arise from confessing it to a priest? If he wishes to be pardoned by God, and to deliver himself from the hell he has deserved, the shame caused by the confession of his sin disposes him to receive pardon. It is but just that the man that has despised God should humble and confound himself. Adelaide, the sinner, gave a beautiful answer to the devil. Being called by God to a change of life, she was converted, and instantly resolved to make a good Confession; the devil placed before her eyes the shame that she should suffer in confessing all her sins, and said to her: "Adelaide, where are you going?" She courageously answered: "Filthy beast, do you ask me where I am going? I am going to confound myself and to confound you."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

IV.—HOW DESERVING JESUS CHRIST IS OF OUR LOVE ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN HIS PASSION.

I.

The love of Jesus Christ towards men created in Him a longing desire for the moment of His death, when His

love should be fully manifested to them; hence He was wont to say in His lifetime : *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!*—(Luke xii. 50). I have to be baptized in My own Blood; and how do I feel Myself straitened with the desire that the hour of My Passion may soon arrive; for then man will know the love I bear him! Hence St. John, speaking of that night in which Jesus began His Passion, writes : *Jesus knowing that his hour was come, that he should pass out of this world to the Father; having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end*—(John xiii. 1). The Redeemer called that hour His own hour (*hora ejus*), because the time of His death was the time desired by Him, as it was then that He wished to give men the last proof of His love, by dying for them upon a Cross, overwhelmed by sorrows.

But what could have ever induced a God to die as a malefactor upon a Cross between two sinners with such insult to His Divine Majesty? "What did this?" asks St. Bernard. He answers : "It was love, careless of its dignity." Ah, love indeed, when it tries to make itself known, does not seek what is becoming to the dignity of the lover, but what will serve best to declare itself to the object loved. St. Francis of Paula, therefore, had good reason to cry out at the sight of a Crucifix : "O charity! O charity! O charity!" And in like manner, when we look upon Jesus on the Cross, we should all exclaim : O love! O love! O love!

II.

Ah, if Faith had not assured us of it, who could have ever believed that a God, almighty, most happy, and the Lord of all, should have condescended to love man to such an extent that He seems to go out of Himself for the love of him? We have seen Wisdom itself, that is the Eternal Word, become foolish through the excessive love He bore to man! So spoke St. Laurence Justinian. "We see Wisdom itself infatuated through excess of love." St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi said the same. One day, being in an ecstasy, she took a wooden

Crucifix in her hands and cried out: "Yes, my Jesus, Thou art mad with love! I repeat it, and I will say it for ever: My Jesus, Thou art mad with love!" But no, says St. Denis the Areopagite: "No, it is not madness, but the ordinary effect of Divine love, which makes him who loves go out of himself in order to give himself up entirely to the object of his love: Divine love causes ecstasy."

Oh, if men would only pause and, looking at Jesus on the Cross, consider the love He has borne each one of them! "With what love," says St. Francis de Sales, "would not our souls become enkindled at the sight of those flames which are in the Redeemer's breast! And oh, what happiness, to be able to be consumed by that same fire with which our God burns for us! What joy, to be united to God by the chains of love!" St. Bonaventure called the Wounds of Jesus Christ, Wounds which pierce the most senseless hearts, and which inflame the most icy souls. How many darts of love come forth from those Wounds, to wound the hardest hearts! Oh, what flames issue from the burning Heart of Jesus Christ to inflame the coldest souls! And chains, how many, from that wounded side, to bind the most stubborn wills!

Low Sunday

Morning Meditation.

"THIS IS THE VICTORY THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, OUR FAITH."

A false balance is in his hand—(Osee xii. 7). In these words the Holy Spirit warns us not to be deceived by the world, because the world weighs its goods in a false balance; we should weigh them in the true balance of

Faith, which will show us what are the true goods. Oh, how wretched I have been, O Lord, in having, for so many years, gone after the vanities of the world, and left Thee, the Sovereign Good!

I.

The thought of the vanity of the world, and that all things that the world values are but falsehood and deceit, has made many souls resolve to give themselves wholly to God. *What does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?*—(Matt. xvi. 26). How many young persons has this great maxim of the Gospel brought to leave relatives, country, possessions, honours, and even crowns, to go to shut themselves up in cloisters or deserts, there to think of God alone! The day of death is called the day of destruction: *The day of destruction is at hand*—(Deut. xxxii. 35). It is a day of destruction, because all the goods we have gained on earth must be left on the day of our death. Wherefore St. Ambrose wisely says that we falsely call these good things *our* good things, for we cannot carry them with us into the other world, where we must dwell forever. It is our holy deeds alone that accompany us, and they alone will comfort us in eternity.

All earthly fortunes, the highest dignities, gold, silver, the most precious jewels, when contemplated from the bed of death lose their splendour; the dark shadow of death obscures even sceptres and crowns, and makes us see that whatever the world values is but smoke, dust, vanity, and misery. And, in truth, at the time of death, what profit is there in all the riches acquired by the dying person, if nothing belongs to him after death except a wooden box, in which he is placed to grow corrupt? For what will vaunted beauty of body serve when there remains of it only a little polluted dust and four fleshless limbs?

What is the life of man upon earth? Behold it, as described by St. James: *It is a vapour which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards will pass away*—(James iv. 15). To-day this great man is esteemed, feared, praised; to-morrow he is despised, contemned, and

abused. *I have seen the wicked highly exalted and lifted up like the cedars of Libanus. And I passed by and, lo, he was not!*—(Ps. xxxvi. 35, 36). He is no longer to be found in his beloved house, in this great palace which he built; and where is he? He is become dust in the grave!

A false balance is in his hand—(Osee xii. 7). In these words the Holy Spirit warns us not to be deceived by the world, because the world weighs its goods in a false balance; we ought to weigh them in the true balance of Faith, which will show us what are the true goods which never end. St. Teresa said we should never take account of anything that ends with death. O God, what greatness has remained to those many first ministers of state, commanders of armies, princes, Roman emperors, now that the scene is changed, and they find themselves in eternity! *Their memory has perished with a noise*—(Ps. ix. 7). They made a great figure in the world, and their names resounded among all; but when they were dead, for them was changed rank, name, and everything. It is useful here to notice an inscription placed over a certain cemetery in which many great men and ladies are buried: "See where end all greatness, all earthly pomp, all beauty. Worms, dust, a worthless stone, a little sand, close the brief scene at the end of all."

Oh, how wretched I have been, O Lord, in having for so many years gone after the vanities of the world, and left Thee, the Sovereign Good!

II.

The fashion of this world passeth away—(1 Cor. vii. 31). Our life is but a scene that passes away and speedily ends; and it must end for all, whether nobles or commoners, kings or subjects, rich or poor. Happy he who, in this scene, has played his part well before God. Philip III., King of Spain, died a young man, at the age of forty-two years; and before he died he said to those who stood by: "When I am dead proclaim the spectacle that you now see; proclaim that, in death, to have been a king serves only to make one feel the pain of having reigned." And then he lamented, saying:

"Oh that during this time I had been in a desert, becoming a Saint, that now I might appear with more confidence before the tribunal of Jesus Christ!"

We know the change of life of St. Francis Borgia at the sight of the corpse of the Empress Isabella, who, in life, was most beautiful, but, after death, struck horror into all who saw her. Borgia, when he saw her, exclaimed, "Thus, then, end the good things of this world!" and he gave himself wholly to God. Oh, that we could all imitate him before death comes upon us! But let us make haste, because death runs towards us, and we know not when it will arrive. Let us not so act that the light that God will then give us will cause us nothing but remorse, when we hold in our hands the candle of death. Let us resolve to do now what we shall then wish to have done, and shall not be able to do.

No, my God, it is not enough that Thou hast hitherto borne with me; I do not wish that Thou shouldst wait longer to see me give myself wholly to Thee. Thou hast warned me many times to have done with this world, and to give myself all to Thy love. Now Thou callest to me to turn to Thee; behold, I come, receive me into Thy arms. I abandon myself wholly to Thee. O spotless Lamb, sacrificed on a Cross for me, wash me first with Thy Blood, and pardon all the injuries Thou hast received from me; and then inflame me with Thy holy love. I love Thee above everything; I love Thee with all my heart. And what can I find in the world more worthy of love than Thou art, or that has loved me more? O Mary, Mother of God, and my advocate, pray for me; obtain for me a true and lasting change of life. In thee I trust.

Spiritual Reading.

CONFESSION.

VI.—DELUSIONS AND VAIN FEARS.

Along with false shame, the devil endeavours to fill the mind of sinners with many delusions and vain fears,

Such a one says : My confessor will rebuke me severely if I tell this sin. Why should he rebuke you? Tell me, were you a confessor, would you speak harshly to a poor penitent who should come to manifest his miseries to you, in the hope of being raised up from his fallen state? How, then, can you imagine that a confessor, who is bound by his office to show charity to those that come to the tribunal of penance, should treat you with harshness and severity, if you confess your sin to him?

Another says : But the confessor will, at least, be shocked at my sin, and will conceive a dislike for me. All false! He will be edified when he sees the good disposition that makes a sinner confess his sins with sincerity, in spite of the shame that he feels. And will he not have heard from other penitents similar or perhaps more grievous sins? Oh, would to God that you were the only sinner in the world! Neither is it true that he will conceive a dislike for those that disclose their guilt to him; on the contrary, he will entertain a greater esteem for them, and will labour more zealously to assist them when he sees the confidence that they place in him, and that has made them reveal their miseries to him.

Alas! what do certain sinners say? I will go to Confession, but not till another confessor comes. And will they, for the sake of avoiding shame, live in the meantime at enmity with God? In danger of being lost forever, in an actual hell caused by the remorse of conscience that lacerates the soul, and that leaves them without peace night or day? And will they remain in sin, or add several sacrileges to the sin they have committed? Do they not know that sacrilege is a horrible sin? Will they change into the poison of eternal death the remedy that Jesus Christ has prepared for them by His Blood, in the Sacrament of Penance? They say they will go to Confession afterwards. But what will become of them for eternity if they meet a sudden death, which is now so frequent that we hear almost every day that someone has died suddenly.

But, some one will say, I have not confidence in my confessor. Go then to another. But should a person not be able to procure a strange confessor,

would it not be madness to conceal his sin? Were he afflicted with an ulcer that might cause death, would he not, if there were no other remedy, instantly call for a surgeon and, however great his shame, would he not make known his disease? And in order to recover the life of the soul and to escape hell a Christian cannot bring himself to open his conscience to a Spiritual Father.

You, then, should have courage, and generously conquer this shame that the devil magnifies so much in your mind. It will be enough to begin to reveal the sin that you have committed; all your vain apprehensions will instantly vanish. And you may be persuaded that after Confession you will feel more happy at having confessed your sins than if you were made monarch of all the earth. Recommend yourself to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and she will obtain for you strength to overcome all repugnance. And if you have not courage to disclose your sins at once to the confessor, say to him: Father, assist me, for I stand in need of help; I have committed a certain sin which I cannot bring myself to confess. The confessor will adopt an easy means of dragging from its den the wild beast that devours you. It will be enough for you to answer "yes" or "no" to his interrogations. Should a person be unwilling to tell his sin in words, he may write it on paper, and show it to the confessor, saying, "I accuse myself of this sin that you have read." And, behold! the eternal and temporal hell has disappeared, the grace of God is recovered, and with it peace of conscience. The greater the violence a person does himself in order to conquer shame, the greater will be the affection with which God will embrace him. Father Paul Segneri the Younger relates that a certain person made such an effort to confess certain sins committed in her infancy that, in disclosing them to her confessor, she swooned away. But in return for the violence that she had done herself the Lord gave her such fervent compunction that thenceforward she gave herself up to a life of perfection and of great austerities, and died with the reputation of a Saint.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

V.—HOW DESERVING JESUS CHRIST IS OF OUR LOVE ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN HIS PASSION.

I.

The Blessed John of Avila, who was so enamoured with the love of Jesus Christ that he never failed in any of his sermons to speak of the love which Jesus Christ bears towards us, in a treatise on the love this most loving Redeemer bears to men, has expressed himself in sentiments so full of the fire of devotion and of such beauty that I desire to insert them here. He says :

"Thou, O Redeemer, hast loved man in such a manner that whoso reflects upon this love cannot do less than love Thee; for Thy love offers violence to hearts : as the Apostle says : *The charity of Christ presseth us*—(2 Cor. v. 14). The source of the love of Jesus Christ for men is His love for His Eternal Father. Hence He said on Maundy Thursday : *That the world may know that I love the Father, arise, let us go hence*—(John xiv. 31). But whither? To die for men upon the Cross!

" No human intellect can conceive how strongly this fire burns in the Heart of Jesus Christ. As He was commanded to suffer death once, so, had He been commanded to die a thousand times, His love had been sufficient to endure it. And if what He suffered for all men had been imposed upon Him for the salvation of each single soul, He would have done the same for each in particular as He did for all. And as He remained three hours upon the Cross, so, had it been necessary, His love would have made Him remain there even to the Day of Judgment. So that Jesus Christ loved much more than He suffered. O Divine love, how far greater wert Thou than Thou didst outwardly seem to be; for though so many wounds and bruises tell us of great love, still they do not tell all its greatness. There was far more within than that which appeared externally.

That was but as a spark which bounded forth from the vast ocean of infinite love. The greatest mark of love is to lay down our life for our friends. But this was not a sufficient mark for Jesus Christ wherewith to express His love."

II.

"This is the love which causes holy souls to lose themselves, and to stand amazed when once they have been allowed to know it. From it spring those burning sentiments of ardour, the desire of Martyrdom, joy in sufferings, exultation under the storms of distress, the strength to walk on burning coals as if they were roses, a thirst for sufferings, rejoicing in what the world dreads, embracing that which it abhors. St. Ambrose says that the soul which is espoused to Jesus Christ upon the Cross thinks nothing so glorious as to bear upon itself the marks of the Crucified One.

"But how, O my Lover, shall I repay this Thy love? It is right that blood should be compensated by blood. May I behold myself dyed in this Blood and nailed to this Cross! O holy Cross, receive me also! O crown of thorns, enlarge thyself, that I too may place thee on my head! O nails, leave those innocent hands of my Lord, and come and pierce my heart with compassion and with love! For Thou, my Jesus, didst die, as St. Paul says, in order to gain dominion over the living and the dead, not by means of chastisements but by love. *For to this end Christ died and rose again: that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living*—(Rom. xiv. 9)."

Monday after Low Sunday

(April 25th)

Morning Meditation.

"THE LORD IS A LITTLE ONE AND EXCEEDINGLY TO BE LOVED."

The Son of God wished to present Himself under the form of a sweet little Child that thus He might the more

readily and the more forcibly draw to Himself the love of men. Little children of themselves are loved at once. To see them and to love them is the same thing. Thus, then, would He be born Who willed to be loved and not feared.

I.

"O souls," exclaims St. Bernard, "love this little Child, for He is exceedingly to be loved! *The Lord is great and greatly to be praised*—(Ps. cxliv. 3). The Lord is a little one and greatly to be loved! Yes, says the Saint, this God has existed from all eternity and is worthy of all praise and reverence for His greatness, as David has sung: *The Lord is great and greatly to be praised!* But now that we behold Him become a little Infant, needing milk, and unable to move, trembling with cold, moaning and weeping, looking for someone to take and warm and comfort Him; ah, now indeed does He become the most cherished One of our hearts! "The Lord is a little One, and exceedingly to be loved!"

We ought to adore Him as our God, but our love ought to keep pace with our reverence towards a God so amiable, so loving.

St. Bonaventure reminds us that a child finds its delight with other children, with flowers, and to be in the arms. The Saint's meaning is, that if we would please this Divine Infant, we too must become children, simple and humble; we must carry to Him flowers of virtue, of meekness, of mortification, of charity; we must clasp Him in the arms of our love.

And, O man, adds St. Bernard, what more do you wait to see before you give yourself wholly to God? See with what labour, with what ardent love, your Jesus has come down from Heaven to seek you. Hearken, he goes on to say, how, scarcely yet born, His wailings call to you, as if He would say: O soul, O soul, it is thee I am seeking; for thee, and to obtain thy love, I am come from Heaven to earth.

O God, even the very brutes, if we do them a kindness, if we give them some trifle, are so grateful for it they come near us, they do our bidding after their own fashion, and they show symptoms of gladness at our approach. And

how comes it, then, that we are so ungrateful towards God, the same God Who has bestowed His whole Self upon us, Who has descended from Heaven to earth, and become an Infant to save us, and to be loved by us? Come, then, let us love the Babe of Bethlehem, is the enraptured cry of St. Francis; let us love Jesus Christ, Who has sought in the midst of such sufferings to attach our hearts to Himself.

St. Augustine says: "For this reason chiefly did Jesus Christ come, that man should know how much God loves him."

But, my Jesus, even now that Thou hast come, how many men are there who truly love Thee? Wretch that I am, Thou knowest how I have hitherto loved Thee! Thou knowest what contempt I have had for Thy love! Oh, that I might die of grief for it! I repent, my dear Redeemer of having despised Thee. Ah, pardon me and give me the grace to love Thee!

II.

And for love of Jesus Christ we ought to love our neighbours, even those who have offended us. The Messias is called by Isaias, *Father of the world to come* —(Is. ix. 6). Now, in order to be the Sons of this Father, Jesus admonishes us that we must love our enemies, and do good to those who injure us: *Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you . . . that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven* —(Matt. v. 44, 46). And of this He Himself set us the example on the Cross, praying His Eternal Father to forgive those who were crucifying Him.

"He who pardons his enemy," says St. John Chrysostom, "cannot but obtain God's pardon for himself"; and we have the Divine assurance of it: *Forgive and you shall be forgiven*—(Luke vi. 37). There was a certain Religious who otherwise had not led a very exemplary life, but who at death bewailed his sins not without great confidence and joy, "because," said he, "I have never avenged an injury done me." As much as to say: "It is true that I have offended the Lord, but He has engaged to pardon him who

pardons his enemies; I have pardoned all who offended me, so then I am confident God will likewise pardon me."

But pardon is not enough for me, O my Jesus; Thou dost merit my love. Thou hast loved me even unto death; unto death will I also love Thee. I love Thee, O Infinite Goodness, with all my soul; I love Thee more than myself. I love my neighbour for the love of Thee. Yes, my Jesus, I love Thee; I will always love Thee, my Treasure, my Life, my Love, my All.

Spiritual Reading

CONFESSION.

VII.—DOUBTS.

I do not wish that any soul be disturbed by what has been said in regard to concealing sins through a false shame. What I have said is applicable only to those who have a consciousness of grievous and certain sins, and who, through shame, will not confess them. With regard to doubts, which some may have of having committed certain sins, or of having made bad confessions, if they wish to disclose them to a confessor for their greater tranquillity, they will do well, unless they have a scrupulous conscience. For the scrupulous, it is not advisable to confess their doubts. It may be useful for the timid to know certain doctrines approved by Theologians, that may save them from a great deal of disquiet of conscience, and give them peace of mind.

First, it is a solid and very probable opinion of Theologians that there is no obligation of confessing doubtful mortal sins, as, for instance, when a person doubts whether he had full advertence, or whether he gave a perfect and deliberate consent. The divines add that at death there is an obligation either of making an act of perfect contrition lest the doubtful sin should have been really grievous, or to tell, not the doubtful sin, but any certain sin (a venial sin is sufficient), and

to receive the Sacrament of Penance. But this is necessary only when a person after the doubtful sin, had never received sacramental absolution. Many Theologians of high authority also say that persons who have for a long time led a spiritual life, when doubtful whether they have consented to mortal sin, may remain certain of not having lost the grace of God; because it is morally impossible that a person well confirmed in good purposes should be suddenly changed and yield to mortal sin without clearly perceiving that he had consented to it. For mortal sin is a monster so horrible that it cannot enter a soul that for a long time has abhorred it without producing on the mind a clear knowledge of its entrance into the soul. This is fully proved in my work on Moral Theology.*

Secondly, when it is certain that a mortal sin has been committed, and when there is a doubt whether it has been ever confessed, then, if the doubt be a negative one—that is, if there be no reason to judge that it has been confessed—it is certainly necessary to tell the sin in Confession. But when there is reason to believe, or a well-founded presumption that the sin has been once told, then according to the common opinion of divines, there is no obligation of confessing it. Hence, divines commonly teach that if a person who has made his general or particular confessions with sufficient diligence doubts whether he has forgotten in confession a certain sin, or circumstance of sin, he is not bound to confess it; because he can prudently judge that it has been already sufficiently confessed.† He need not confess the sin, though he should feel a great unwillingness to disclose the doubt that tormented him. But such a person may say: If I were bound to tell such a thing I should feel great shame. But what does it matter that you are ashamed to tell it? As long as you are not obliged to confess it be not troubled. The confession of certain natural actions should also cause shame, but you are not therefore obliged to mention them. Thus, for example, you are not obliged to confess certain acts of levity or immodest jests that occurred in your childhood without a knowledge of their malice. Nor is your

* Lib. 6, n. 450 *et* 476. † Lib. 6, n. 477.

having done these acts in secret a certain proof of malice; for children do certain natural actions secretly, though these actions are not sins. Hence we are not bound to accuse ourselves in particular of such things, unless we remember that we committed them with an impression, or at least with a doubt, that they were grievous sins. It is, then, enough for a person to say within himself: Lord, if I really knew that I was bound to confess these things I would readily confess them, though I should suffer every pain.

This is intended for the comfort of timorous souls that feel great anxiety arising from a fear that they did not well know how to explain all their doubts in Confession. But it is useful for all, at least for their humiliation, to make known to their director the doubts by which they are troubled. I except the scrupulous, for they should not speak of their doubts. What I would advise is that all would explain to their confessors their passions, attachments, and the causes of their temptations, that he may be able to cut off the roots which, if not extirpated, will never cease to cause temptations, and will expose the soul to great danger of consenting to sin, when it can but will not remove the cause. It will also be very profitable to some to disclose the temptations that are most humiliating, particularly thoughts against chastity, though there should be no consent. St. Philip Neri used to say that a temptation disclosed is half-conquered. I have said that it is very profitable to *some*: for with regard to others of tried virtue, who are too timid on this point and are always afraid of having consented to sin, it is sometimes useful to forbid them to confess such temptations, unless they are certain of having yielded to them. For by the very examination that such persons make in order to ascertain whether they have consented or not, and thinking of the manner in which they will explain the temptation, the images of the bad objects presented to the mind become more vivid, and the soul becomes more agitated by repeated apprehensions of consent. Obey your confessor on this point, and be ruled by his advice.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

VI.—HOW DESERVING JESUS CHRIST IS OF OUR LOVE ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN HIS PASSION.

I.

"O Jesus, stealer of hearts, the strength of Thy love has broken the exceeding hardness of our hearts! Thou hast inflamed the whole world with Thy love. O most loving Lord, inebriate our hearts with this wine, consume them with this fire, pierce them with this dart of Thy love! Thy Cross is indeed an arrow which pierces hearts. May all the world know that my heart is smitten! O sweetest Love, what hast Thou done? Thou hast come to heal me and Thou hast wounded me. Thou hast come to teach me, and Thou hast made me well nigh mad. O madness full of wisdom, may I never live without thee! All, O Lord, that I behold upon the Cross, invites me to love Thee: the wood, the figure, the Wounds of Thy Body; and, above all, Thy love engages me to love Thee, and never more to forget Thee.

II.

But in order to arrive at the perfect love of Jesus Christ we must adopt the means of doing so. The means which St. Thomas Aquinas gives us: (1) To have a constant remembrance of the benefits of God, both general and particular; (2) To consider the infinite goodness of God Who is ever waiting to do us good, and Who ever loves us and seeks from us our love; (3) To avoid even the smallest thing that could offend Him; (4) To renounce all the sensible goods of this world, riches, honours, and sensual pleasures. Father Thaulers says that meditation on the Sacred Passion of Jesus Christ is a great means also for acquiring His perfect love.

Who can deny that, of all devotions, devotion to the Passion of Jesus Christ is the most useful, the most tender, the most agreeable to God—one that gives the

greatest consolation to sinners, and at the same time most powerfully enkindles loving souls? Whence is it that we receive so many blessings, if it be not from the Passion of Jesus Christ? Whence have we hope of pardon, courage against temptations, confidence that we shall go to Heaven? Whence come so many lights to know the truth, so many loving calls, so many spurrings to change our life, so many desires to give ourselves to God, as from the Passion of Jesus Christ? The Apostle therefore had but too great reason to declare him to be excommunicated who did not love Jesus Christ: *If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema*—(1 Cor. xvi. 22).

Tuesday after Low Sunday

Morning Meditation.

PURITY OF INTENTION.

In the estimation of men, the value of an act increases in proportion to the length of time spent in the performance of it; but with God, the value of an act depends on the purity of intention with which it is performed. Men look only to the external act; God regards the heart, that is, the intention with which the act is done. *For man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart*—(1 Kings xvi. 7).

I.

Purity of intention consists in doing everything from a simple desire to please God. Jesus Christ has said that according to the intention, whether it be good or evil, so is our work judged before God. *If thine eye be single, thine whole body shall be lightsome; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome*—(Matt.

vi. 22, 23. The *single eye* signifies a pure intention of pleasing God; the dark and *evil eye* signifies a want of such honest and holy intention—when our actions are done from a motive of vanity, or from a desire to please ourselves.

Can any action be more noble than for a man to give his life for the Faith? And yet St. Paul says that he who dies from any motive but that of a pure desire to do God's will, gains nothing by his martyrdom.

If, then, martyrdom avails nothing unless it be endured for the sake of God alone, of what value will be all the preaching, all the labour of good works, and also all the austerities of penitents, if they are done to obtain the praise of men or to satisfy one's own inclination?

The Prophet Aggæus says that works, even the holiest, if not done for God, are put in bags full of holes; which means that they are all lost directly, and that no good comes of them. On the contrary, every action done with an intention of pleasing God, of however little value in itself, is worth more than many great works done without such pure intention.

We read in St. Mark that the poor widow cast into the alms-box of the temple only two mites; but yet of her the Saviour said: *This poor widow hath cast in more than all*—(Mark xii. 43). St. Cyprian remarks on this, that she put in more than all the others because she gave those two little pieces of money with the pure intention of pleasing God.

One of the best signs by which we may know whether a person's work is done with the right intention is that if the work has not the effect desired he will not be at all disturbed. Another good sign is that when a person has completed any work and is spoken ill of because of it, or is repaid with ingratitude, he nevertheless remains contented and tranquil. On the other hand, if it happen to any one to be praised for his work, he must not disquiet himself with the fear of being filled with vainglory; but should such a temptation come upon him only let him despise it in his heart and

say with St. Bernard, "I did not begin it for thee, nor because of thee will I leave it."

When, O my Jesus, shall I begin to love Thee truly? Miserable that I am! If I seek among my works for any that are good—for one work done only to please Thee, my Saviour—I shall not find it. Alas! then, have pity on me, and suffer not that I continue to serve Thee so ill up the time of my death.

II.

To work with an intention of acquiring more glory in Heaven is good, but the most perfect is the desire to give glory to God. Let us be sure that the more we divest ourselves of our earthly interest, so much the more will our Saviour increase our joy in Paradise. Blessed is he who labours only to give glory to God, and to follow His holy will. Let us imitate the love of the Blessed, who, in loving God, seek only to please Him. St. Chrysostom says: "If we can attain to the fulfilment of God's pleasure, what more can we desire? If thou art counted worthy to do anything that pleases God, dost thou ask any other reward?"

This is that single eye which pierces the Heart of God with love towards us; as He says to the holy Spouse: *Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast wounded my heart with one of thine eyes*—(Cant. iv. 9). This single eye signifies the one end that holy souls have in all their actions—that of pleasing God. And this was the counsel that the Apostle gave to his disciples: *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God*—(1 Cor. x. 31). The Venerable Beatrice of the Incarnation, the first daughter of St. Teresa, said: "No price can be put on anything, however small, that is done entirely for God." And with great reason she said this, for all works done for God are acts of Divine love. Purity of intention makes the lowest actions become precious, such as eating, working, recreation, when they are done from obedience and from a desire to please God.

We must, then, in the morning direct to God all the

actions of the day; and it will be very useful to us to renew this intention at the beginning of every action, at least of the most important, such as Meditation, Communion, and Spiritual Reading—pausing a little in the beginning of these, like the holy hermit who, before beginning anything, lifted his eyes to Heaven and remained still; and when he was asked what he was doing, replied: "I am making sure of my aim."

My God, grant me Thy help that what remains of life I may spend only in serving and loving Thee. Make me overcome all, that I may please Thee, and do all only to fulfil Thy good pleasure; through the merits of Thy Passion, I ask it. O my great advocate, Mary, obtain for me this grace by thy prayers!

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

I.—HOW GREAT SHOULD BE OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY, WHO IS THE QUEEN OF MERCY.

As the glorious Virgin Mary has been raised to the dignity of Mother of the King of kings, it is not without reason that the Church honours her, and wishes her to be honoured by all, with the glorious title of Queen.

"If the Son is a King," says St. Athanasius, "the Mother who bore Him is rightly and truly considered a Queen and a Sovereign." "No sooner had Mary," says St. Bernardine of Sienna, "consented to be Mother of the Eternal Word, than she merited by this consent to be made Queen of the world and of all creatures." "Since the flesh of Mary," remarks the Abbot Arnold of Chartres, "was not different from that of Jesus, how can the royal dignity of the Son be denied to the Mother?" "Hence we must consider the glory of the Son, not only as being common to His Mother, but as one with her."

"And if Jesus is King of the Universe, Mary is also its

Queen. "And as Queen," says the Abbot Rupert, "she possesses, by right, the whole kingdom of her Son." Hence St. Bernardine of Sienna concludes that "as many creatures as there are who serve God, so many there are who serve Mary: for as Angels and men, and all things that are in Heaven and on earth are subject to the empire of God, so are they also under the dominion of Mary!" The Abbot Guerricus, addressing himself to the Divine Mother on this subject, says: "Continue Mary, continue to dispose with confidence of the riches of thy Son; act as Queen, Mother, and Spouse of the King: for to thee belongs dominion and power over all creatures!"

Mary, then, is a Queen; but, for our common consolation, be it known that she is Queen so sweet, so clement, and so ready to help us in our miseries, that the holy Church wills that we should salute her in this prayer under the title of Queen of Mercy.

"The title of Queen," remarks Blessed Albert the Great, "differs from that of Empress, which implies severity and rigour, in signifying compassion and charity towards the poor." "The greatness of kings and queens," says Seneca, "consists in relieving the wretched," and whereas tyrants when they reign have their own good in view, kings should have that of their subjects at heart. For this reason it is that, at their consecration, kings have their heads anointed with oil, which is the symbol of mercy, to denote that, as kings, they should above all things nourish in their hearts feelings of compassion and benevolence towards their subjects.

Kings should, then, occupy themselves principally in works of mercy, but not so as to forget the just punishments that are to be inflicted on the guilty. It is, however, not thus with Mary, who, although a Queen, is not a Queen of Justice intent on the punishment of the wicked, but a Queen of Mercy, intent only on commiserating and pardoning sinners. And this is the reason for which the Church requires that we should expressly call her "the Queen of Mercy." The great Chancellor of Paris, John Gerson, in his commentary on the words

of David, *These two things have I heard, that power belongeth to God, and mercy to thee, O Lord*—(Ps. lxi. 12), says that the kingdom of God, consisting in justice and mercy, was divided by our Lord : the kingdom of justice he reserved for Himself, and that of mercy He yielded to Mary, ordaining at the same time that all mercies that are dispensed to men should pass through the hands of Mary, and be disposed of by her at will. These are Gerson's own words : "The kingdom of God consists in power and mercy; reserving power to Himself, He, in some way, yielded the empire of mercy to His Mother." This is confirmed by St. Thomas in his preface to the Canonical Epistles, saying, "that when the Blessed Virgin conceived the Eternal Word in her womb, and brought Him forth, she obtained half the kingdom of God; so that she is Queen of Mercy, as Jesus Christ is King of Justice."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

VII.—HOW DESERVING JESUS CHRIST IS OF OUR LOVE ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN HIS PASSION.

I.

St. Bonaventure says there is no devotion more fitted for sanctifying a soul than meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ; hence he advises us to meditate every day upon the Passion, if we would advance in the love of God. "If you would make progress, meditate daily on the Passion of the Lord; for nothing works such an entire sanctification in the soul as the meditation of the Passion of Christ." And before him St. Augustine, as de Bustis relates, said that one tear shed in memory of the Passion is worth more than fasting weekly on bread and water. Wherefore the Saints were always occupied in considering the sorrows of Jesus Christ : it was by this means that St. Francis of Assisi became a seraph. The Seraphic Saint was one day found shedding tears

and crying out with a loud voice. Being asked the cause, "I weep," he replied, "over the sorrows and ignominies of my Lord; and what causes me the greatest sorrow is, that men, for whom He suffered so much, live in forgetfulness of Him." And on saying this he wept the more, so that this gentleman began also himself to weep.

O Jesus, bring continually to my remembrance, I beseech Thee, all that Thou hast suffered for me, so that I may never more forget to love Thee. O cords that bound my Jesus, bind me to Jesus; thorns that crowned my Jesus, pierce me with the love of Jesus; nails that transfixed my Jesus, nail me to the Cross of Jesus, that I may live and die united to Jesus. O Blood of Jesus, inebriate me with His holy love! O death of Jesus, make me die to every earthly affection!

Pierced feet of my Lord, I embrace you! Deliver me from hell which I have deserved. My Jesus, in hell I could no more love Thee, and yet I desire to love Thee always. Save me, my dearest Saviour; bind me to Thyself, that I may never again lose Thee. O Mary, refuge of sinners and Mother of my Saviour, help a sinner who wishes to love God, and who recommends himself to you: succour me for the love you bear to Jesus Christ.

II.

When St. Francis heard the bleating of a lamb, or saw anything which reminded him of the Passion of Jesus, he immediately shed tears. On one occasion, being sick, he was told to read some pious book. "My book," he replied, "is Jesus crucified." Hence he did nothing but exhort his brethren to be ever thinking of the Passion of Jesus Christ. Tiepoli writes: "He who becomes not inflamed with the love of God by looking on Jesus dead upon the Cross, will never love at all."

O Eternal Word, Thou hast spent three-and-thirty years in labours and fatigues; Thou hast given Thy life and Thy Blood for man's salvation; in short, Thou hast spared nothing to make men love Thee; and how is it possible that there should be those who know this, and yet do not love Thee? O God, among these ungrateful

ones I also may be numbered! I see the wrong I have done Thee; O my Jesus have pity upon me! I offer Thee this ungrateful heart—ungrateful, it is true, but penitent. Yes, I repent above every other evil, O my dear Redeemer, for having despised Thee! I repent, and I am sorry with my whole heart.

O my soul, love a God Who is bound like a criminal for thee; a God scourged like a slave for thee; a God made a mock king for Thee; a God, in short, dead upon a Cross, as the vilest outcast for thee! Yes, my Saviour, my God, I love Thee, I love Thee!

Wednesday after Low Sunday

Morning Meditation.

CHARITY TOWARDS THE NEIGHBOUR.

An act of Charity performed towards a neighbour will be accepted by Jesus Christ as done to Himself. *I say to you,* says the Redeemer, *as long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me*—(Matt. xxv. 40). St. Catharine of Genoa used to say our love of God is to be measured by our love for our neighbour.

I.

To love God without at the same time loving our neighbour is impossible. The same precept that prescribes love towards God imposes a strict obligation of brotherly Charity. *And this commandment we have from God that he who loveth God love also his brother* —(1 John iv. 21). Hence St. Thomas teaches that the love of God and the love of our neighbour proceed alike from Charity. For Charity makes us love God and our

neighbour, because such is the will of God. Such, too, was the doctrine of St. John the Evangelist. St. Jerome relates that being asked by his disciples why he frequently recommended fraternal love, that holy Apostle replied : " Because it is the precept of the Lord, and the fulfilment of it alone is sufficient."

St. Catharine of Genoa once said to the Lord : " My God, Thou dost command me to love my neighbour; and I can love none but Thee." " My child," answered Jesus, " he that loves Me, loves whatsoever I love." Indeed, when we love a person we also love his relatives, his servants, his likeness, and even his clothes, because we know he loves them. And why do we love our neighbours? It is because God loves them. Hence St. John says that *if any man say I love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar*—(1 John iv. 20). But as hatred towards our neighbours is incompatible with the love of God, so an act of Charity performed in their regard will be accepted by Jesus Christ as done for Himself. *Amen, I say to you*, says the Redeemer, *as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren you did it to me*—(Matt. xxv. 40). St. Catharine of Genoa used to say that our love of God is to be measured by our love for our neighbour.

Ah, my Redeemer, how unlike I am to Thee! Thou wast all Charity towards Thy persecutors, and I am all rancour and hatred towards my neighbour. Thou didst pray with so much love for those who crucified Thee, and I immediately seek revenge against those who offend me. O God of love, give me Thy love.

II.

Oh, what a Paradise where Charity reigns! It is the delight of God Himself. *Behold*, says the Psalmist, *how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*—(Ps. cxxxii. 1). The Lord looks with complacency on the Charity of brethren and sisters who dwell together in unity, who are united by one will of serving God, and who seek only to sanctify one another that they may be all united one day in the land of bliss. The highest praise bestowed by St. Luke

on the first Christians was that they had but one heart and soul. *And the multitude of the believers had but one heart and one soul*—(Acts. iv. 32). This unity was the fruit of the prayer of Jesus Christ Who before His Passion besought His Eternal Father to make His disciples one by holy Charity, as He and the Father are one. *Holy Father, keep them in thy name . . . that they may be one as we also are*—(John xvii. 11). This unity is one of the principal fruits of Redemption, as may be inferred from the prediction of Isaias : *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. They shall not hurt, nor shall they kill in all my holy mountain*—(Is. xi. 6, 9). Yes, the followers of Jesus, though of different countries and of different dispositions, shall live in peace with one another, each seeking by holy Charity to accommodate himself to the wishes and inclinations of the other. (And as a certain author has well remarked, what does a community of religious mean but a union of many by will and desire so as to form but one person?) It is Charity that maintains union; for it is not possible that all should have congenial dispositions. It is Charity that unites the hearts of all, and makes them bear one another's burdens, and conform to the will of each other.

St. John Climacus relates that in the vicinity of Alexandria there was a celebrated monastery, where, because they loved one another so cordially in holy Charity, all the Religious enjoyed the peace of Paradise. In general the first that perceived a disagreement between two of the Religious was able to restore peace by a mere sign. But if they could not be reconciled, both were sent as exiles to a neighbouring house, and were told at their departure that the abode of two demons in the monastery could be no longer profitable to the Community.

O Lord, abandon me not to my passions. Give me strength to love and to do good to all who injure me. For the sake of Thy Blood, O Jesus, permit me not to be separated from Thee. O Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

II.—HOW GREAT SHOULD BE OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY, WHO IS THE QUEEN OF MERCY.

The Eternal Father made Jesus Christ the King of Justice, and consequently universal Judge of the world: and therefore the Royal Prophet sings: *Give to the King thy judgment, O God, and to the King's Son thy justice*—(Ps. lxxi. 2). Here a learned interpreter takes up the sentence, and says: "O Lord, Thou hast given justice to Thy Son because Thou hast given mercy to the King's Mother." And on this subject St. Bonaventure, paraphrasing the words of David, thus interprets them: "Give to the King Thy judgment, O God, and Thy mercy to the Queen His Mother." Ernest, Archbishop of Prague, also remarks, "that the Eternal Father gave the office of Judge and Avenger to the Son, and that of showing mercy and relieving the necessitous to the Mother." This was foretold by the Prophet David, for he says that God, so to speak, consecrated Mary Queen of Mercy, anointing her with the oil of gladness: *God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness*—(Ps. xliv. 8), in order that we miserable children of Adam may rejoice, remembering that in Heaven we have this great Queen, overflowing with the unction of mercy and compassion towards us: and thus we can say with St. Bonaventure, "O Mary, thou art full of the unction of mercy and of the oil of compassion."

And how beautifully does not Blessed Albert the Great apply to this subject the history of Queen Esther, who was herself a great type of our Queen Mary!

We read, in the fourth chapter of the Book of Esther, that in the reign of Assuerus, a decree was issued by which all Jews were condemned to death. Mardochai, who was one of the condemned, addressed himself to Esther, in order that she might interpose with Assuerus

and obtain the revocation of the decree, and thus be the salvation of all. At first Esther declined the office, fearing that such a request might irritate the king still more; but Mardochai reproved her, sending her word that she was not to think only of saving herself, for God had placed her on the throne to obtain the salvation of all the Jews : *Think not that thou mayest save thy life only, because thou art in the king's house, more than all the Jews*—(Esth. iv. 13). And so can we poor sinners address our Queen Mary, should she show any repugnance to obtain of God our delivery from the chastisement we have justly deserved : " Think not, O Lady, that God has raised thee to the dignity of Queen of the world only to provide for thy own good; but in order that, being so great, thou mightest be better able to compassionate and assist us miserable creatures."

As soon as Assuerus saw Esther standing before him he asked her, with love, what she came to seek. *What is thy request?* The Queen replied : *If I have found favour in thy sight, O King . . . give me my people, for which I request*—(Esth. vii. 2, 3). Assuerus granted her request, and immediately ordered the revocation of the decree. And now, if Assuerus, through love for Esther granted, at her request, salvation to the Jews, how can God refuse the prayers of Mary, loving her immensely as He does, when she prays for poor miserable sinners who recommend themselves to her, and says to Him : " My King and my God, if ever I have found favour in Thy sight *give me my people for which I ask.* The Divine Mother well knows that she was the blessed, the holy one, the only one of the human race, who found the grace lost by all mankind; well does she know that she is the beloved one of her Lord, loved more than all the Saints and Angels together. Is it possible, then, that God should refuse her? And who is ignorant of the power of the prayers of Mary with God? *The law of clemency is on her tongue*—(Prov. xxxi. 26). Each of her prayers is, as it were, an established law for our Lord, that He should show mercy to all for whom she intercedes. St. Bernard asks why the Church calls Mary " the Queen of Mercy "? And he replies that " it is

because we believe that she opens the abyss of the mercy of God to whomsoever she wills, when she wills, and as she wills; so that there is no sinner, however great, who is lost if Mary protects him."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

VIII.—HOW MUCH JESUS CHRIST DESERVES TO BE LOVED BY US ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN INSTITUTING THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

I.

Jesus, knowing that his hour was come, that he should pass out of this world to the Father; having loved his own . . . he loved them unto the end—(John xiii. 1). Our most loving Saviour, knowing that His hour was now come for leaving this earth, desired before He went to die for us, to leave us the greatest possible mark of His love; and this was the gift of the most Holy Sacrament. St. Bernardine of Sienna remarks that men remember more continually, and love more tenderly, the signs of love which are shown to them at the hour of death. Hence it is the custom that friends, when about to die, leave to those persons they have loved some gift, such as a garment or a ring, as a memorial of their affection. But what hast Thou, O my Jesus, left us, when quitting this world, in memory of Thy love? Not, indeed, a garment or a ring, but Thine own Body, Thy Blood, Thy Soul, Thy Divinity, Thy whole Self, without reserve. "He gave thee all," says St. John Chrysostom; "He left nothing for Himself."

II.

The Council of Trent says that in this gift of the Eucharist Jesus Christ desired, as it were, to pour forth all the riches of the love He had for men. And the Apostle observes that Jesus desired to bestow this gift upon men on the very night itself when they were planning

His death : *The same night in which he was betrayed, he took bread; and giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye and eat; this is my body*—(1 Cor. xi. 23—24). St. Bernardine of Sienna says that Jesus Christ, burning with love for us, and not content with being prepared to give His life for us, was constrained by the excess of His love to perform a greater work before He died; and this was to give His own Body for our Food.

This Sacrament, therefore, was rightly named by St. Thomas, "*the Sacrament of love; the pledge of love.*" *Sacrament of love*, for love was the only motive which induced Jesus Christ to give us in It His whole Self. *Pledge of love*, so that if we had ever doubted His love, we should have in this Sacrament a pledge of it : as if our Redeemer, in leaving us this gift, had said : O souls, if you ever doubted My love, behold I leave you Myself in this Sacrament; with such a pledge you can never any more doubt that I love you, and love you to excess.

Thursday after Low Sunday

Morning Meditation.

CHARITY IN OUR THOUGHTS AND SENTIMENTS.

Put ye on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy—(Col. iii. 12). The followers of Jesus Christ should be clothed, not only with Charity, but with the *bowels of charity*, so that in all their actions they should be clothed and encompassed around with Charity. They should love each one as if for each they had the tenderest

affection. "Charity," says St. Augustine, "does not grieve much even when she thinks well of the bad."

I.

To practise charity in thought, you must, in the first place, endeavour to banish all rash judgments, suspicions, and doubts. To entertain a rash doubt regarding another is a defect; to indulge a positive suspicion is a greater fault, and to judge with certainty without certain grounds that another has sinned is still more criminal before God. Whoever judges rashly of his neighbour shall be judged with severity. *Judge not, that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge you shall be judged*—(Matt. vii. 1). But although it is sinful to judge evil of others without certain grounds, still it is not a violation of the Divine law to suspect or even to judge evil of them when we have certain motives for such suspicions or judgments. However, the safest and most charitable rule is to think well of all, and to banish all such judgments and suspicions. *Charity*, says the Apostle, *thinketh no evil*—(1 Cor. xiii. 5). If by your office you are not charged with the correction of others, endeavour always to judge favourably of all. St. Jane Frances de Chantal used to say that "in our neighbour we should observe only what is good." Should you sometimes through mistake praise in others what is censurable, you will never have reason to repent of your error. "Charity," says St. Augustine, "does not grieve much even when she thinks well of the bad." St. Catharine of Bologna once said: "I have lived for many years in religion, and have never thought ill of any of my sisters; because I know that a person who appears to be imperfect may be more dear to God than another whose conduct is much more exemplary." Be careful, then, not to indulge in observing the defects and concerns of others, nor to imitate the example of those who go about asking what others say of them, and thus fill their minds with suspicions, and their hearts with bitterness and aversions. Listen not to them who tell you that others

have spoken of your defects, and ask not from them the names of those who dispraised you. In such tales there is, in general, a great deal of exaggeration. Let your conduct be such as deserves praise from all, but regard not what is said of you. When told that anyone has charged you with a certain fault, let your answer be that others know you but little; and that, were they aware of all your defects, they would say a great deal more of you; or you may say that only God is to be your judge.

II.

When our neighbour is visited with any infirmity, loss, or other calamity, charity obliges us to regret his misfortune at least with the superior will. I say with the *superior will*, for concupiscence always appears to take a certain delight in hearing that a calamity has befallen an enemy. But that delight is not culpable as long as it is resisted by the will. Whenever the inferior appetite solicits the will to rejoice at the misfortune of others, pay no more attention to its criminal solicitations than you would to a dog that barks without reason; but endeavour to excite in the superior will sentiments of regret at their distress. It is indeed sometimes lawful to rejoice at the good effects that are likely to result from the temporal afflictions of others. For example, it is not forbidden to be glad from a motive of his conversion, or of the cessation of scandal, that a notorious and obstinate sinner has been visited with sickness. However, should he have offended us, the joy occasioned by his infirmity may be the fruit of passion as well as of zeal. "It may indeed often happen," says St. Gregory, "that, without losing charity, we rejoice at the ruin of an enemy; and that without incurring the guilt of envy we feel sorrow at his exaltation, when by his downfall we think that others will be justly exalted, and when we fear that by his prosperity many will be unjustly oppressed."

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

III.—HOW GREAT SHOULD BE OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY WHO IS THE QUEEN OF MERCY.

May it not, perhaps, be feared that Mary would not deign to interpose for some sinners because they are so overloaded with crimes? Or perhaps we ought to be overawed at the majesty and holiness of this great Queen? "No," says St. Gregory VII, "for the higher and more holy she is, the greater is her sweetness and compassion towards sinners who have recourse to her with the desire to amend their lives." Kings and queens, with their ostentation of majesty, inspire terror, and cause their subjects to fear to approach them: but what fear, says St. Bernard, can the miserable have of approaching this Queen of Mercy? "Why should human frailty fear to go to Mary? In her there is no austerity, nothing terrible: she is all sweetness, offering milk and wool to all." Mary is not only willing to give, but she herself offers milk and wool to all: the milk of mercy to animate our confidence, and the wool of her protection against the thunderbolts of Divine justice.

Suetonius relates of the Emperor Titus that he could never refuse a favour, so much so that he sometimes promised more than he could grant; and when admonished of this he replied that a prince should never send away any person whom he admitted to his audience dissatisfied. Titus spoke thus, but in reality he must often have deceived or failed in his promises. Our Queen cannot deceive, and can obtain all that she wills for her clients. Moreover, "our Lord has given her so benign and compassionate a heart," says Lanspergius, "that she cannot send away any one dissatisfied who prays to her." But how, to use the words of St. Bonaventure, canst thou, O Mary, who art the Queen of Mercy, refuse to succour the miserable? And "who," asks the Saint,

" are the subjects for mercy, if not the miserable? And since thou art the Queen of Mercy," he continues, " and I am the most miserable of sinners, it follows that I am the first of thy subjects. How, then, O Lady, canst thou do otherwise than exercise thy mercy on me?" Have pity on us, then, O Queen of Mercy, and take charge of our salvation.

" Say not, O holy Virgin," says St. George of Nicomedia, " that thou canst not assist us on account of the number of our sins, for thy power and thy compassion are such, that no number of sins, however great, can outweigh them. Nothing resists thy power, for our common Creator, honouring thee as His Mother, considers thy glory as His own " : and the Son, " exulting it it, fulfils thy petitions as if He were paying a debt "; meaning thereby, that although Mary is under an infinite obligation to the Son for having chosen her to be His Mother, yet it cannot be denied that the Son is under great obligation to her for having given Him His humanity; and therefore Jesus, to pay as it were what He owes to Mary, and glorying in her glory, honours her in a special manner by listening to and granting all her petitions.

How great, then, should be our confidence in this Queen, knowing her great power with God, and that she is so rich and full of mercy that there is no one living on the earth who does not partake of her compassion and favour. This was revealed by our Blessed Lady herself to St. Bridget, saying: " I am the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of Mercy; I am the joy of the just and the door through which sinners are brought to God. There is no sinner on earth so accursed as to be deprived of my mercy; for all, if they receive nothing else through my intercession, receive the grace of being less tempted by devils than they would otherwise have been." " No one," she adds, " unless the irrevocable sentence has been pronounced " (that is, the one pronounced on the damned), "is so cast off by God, who will not return to God and enjoy His mercy, if he invokes my aid. I am called by all the Mother of Mercy, and truly the mercy of my Son towards men has made me

thus merciful towards them." She concludes by saying that miserable will he be, and miserable will he be for all eternity, who, in this life, having it in his power to invoke her, who is so compassionate to all, and so desirous to assist sinners, is miserable enough not to invoke her, and so is damned.

Let us, then, have recourse, and always have recourse, to this most sweet Queen, if we would be certain of salvation; and if we are alarmed and disheartened at the sight of our sins, let us remember that, it is in order to save the greatest and most abandoned sinners who recommend themselves to her that Mary is made the Queen of Mercy. Such have to be her crown in Heaven, according to the words addressed to her by her Divine Spouse: *Come from Libanus, my spouse; come from Libanus, come: thou shalt be crowned; . . . from the dens of the lions from the mountains of the leopards*—(Cant. iv. 8). And what are these dens of beasts but miserable sinners whose souls have become the home of sin, the most frightful monster that can be found. "With such souls," says the Abbot Rupert, addressing our Blessed Lady, "saved by thy means, O great Queen Mary, wilt thou be crowned in Heaven; for their salvation will form a diadem worthy of, and well-becoming, a Queen of Mercy."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST

IX.—HOW MUCH JESUS CHRIST DESERVES TO BE LOVED BY US ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN INSTITUTING THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

I.

St. Bernard calls the Eucharist "the love of loves"; because this gift comprehends all the other gifts bestowed upon us by our Lord—creation, redemption, predestination to glory—so that the Eucharist is not only a pledge of the love of Jesus Christ, but of Paradise, which

He desires also to give us. " In this Divine Banquet," says the Church, " a pledge of future glory is given us." Hence St. Philip Neri could find no other name for Jesus Christ in this Sacrament save that of *Love* : and so, when the Holy Viaticum was brought to him he was heard to exclaim : " Behold my Love ! Give me my Love !"

The Prophet Isaias desired that the whole world should know the tender inventions our God has made use of wherewith to make men love Him. And who could ever have thought—if He Himself had not done it—that the Incarnate Word would hide Himself under the appearance of bread, in order to become Himself our Food ? " Does it not seem folly," says St. Augustine, " to say : Eat My Flesh ; drink My Blood ?" When Jesus Christ revealed to His disciples the Sacrament He desired to leave them they could not bring themselves to believe Him ; and they left Him, saying : *How can this man give us his flesh to eat? . . . This saying is hard, and who can hear it?*—(John vi. 53, 61). But that which men could neither conceive nor believe the great love of Jesus Christ hath thought of and accomplished. *Take ye and eat*, said He to His disciples before He went to die ; and through them to us all. Receive and eat : but what food shall that be, O Saviour of the world, which You desire to give us before You die ? *Take ye, and eat ; this is my body.* This is not earthly food ; it is I Myself who give Myself entirely to you.

II.

And oh, with what desire does Jesus Christ pant to come into our souls in the Holy Communion ! *With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer* —(Luke xxii. 15). So He spoke on that night in which He instituted this Sacrament of love. *With desire I have desired* : so did the excessive love He bore us cause Him to speak, as St. Laurence Justinian remarks : " These are the words of most burning love." And in order that every one might easily receive Him, He desired to leave Himself under the appearance of bread ; for if He had left Himself under the appearance of some rare or very costly food, the poor would have been deprived of Him :

but no, Jesus would hide Himself under the form of bread, which costs but little, and can be found everywhere, in order that all in every country might be able to find Him and receive Him.

Friday after Low Sunday

Morning Meditation.

THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST OUR HOPE.

Jesus is the only hope of our salvation. *Neither is there salvation in any other*—(Acts iv. 12). Oh, what a secure place of refuge shall we ever find in those sacred clefts of the rock, that is to say, in the Wounds of Jesus Christ! There shall we be set free from that feeling of distrust which the sight of our sins may produce. There shall we find weapons of defence against temptations; there shall we find sufficient strength to resist the assaults of the world.

I.

Jesus is the only hope of our salvation: *There is no salvation in any other but him*—(Acts iv. 12). I am the only door, says He; and he that shall enter in through Me shall assuredly find life eternal: *I am the door; if any one enter by me, he shall be saved*—(John x. 9). And what sinner would ever have been able to hope for pardon if Jesus had not, by His Blood and by His Death, made satisfaction to the Divine justice for us? *He shall bear their iniquities*—(Is. liii.). It is by this that the Apostle encourages us, saying: *If the blood of goats and of oxen sanctify such as are defiled to the cleansing of the flesh, how much more shall the blood*

of Christ, who, through the Holy Ghost, offered himself up to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God!—(Heb. ix. 13). If the blood of goats and of bulls offered up in sacrifice removed from the Jews the outward defilements of the body, that so they could be admitted to the worship of the Sanctuary, how much more shall the Blood of Jesus Christ, Who for love offered Himself up as a satisfaction for us, remove sin from our souls to enable us to serve our God Most High!

Our loving Redeemer, having come into the world for no other end than that of saving sinners, and beholding the sentence of condemnation already recorded against us for our sins, what was it, then, He did? He, by His own Death, paid the penalty that was due to ourselves; and with His own Blood cancelling the sentence of the condemnation in order that the Divine justice might no more seek from us the satisfaction due, He nailed it to the same Cross whereon He died: *Blotting out the hand-writing of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And the same he took out of the way, fastening it to the cross*—(Col. ii. 14).

Christ entered once into the holy place, having found eternal redemption—(Heb. ix. 12). Ah, my Jesus, hadst Thou not found this mode of obtaining pardon for us, who would ever have been able to find it? It was with reason that David cried out, *Declare his ways*—(Ps. ix. 12). Make known, O ye blessed, the loving contrivances which our God has employed in order to save us. Since then, O my sweet Saviour, Thou hast had such a love for me, cease not from exercising mercy towards me. Thou, by Thy Death, hast rescued me from the hands of Lucifer: into Thy hands do I consign my soul; it is for Thee to save it: *Into thy hands I commend my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O God of truth.*

II.

Little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin: but if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just, and he is the propitiation for our sins—(1 John ii. 1). Jesus Christ

did not with His Death bring to an end His intercession for us with the Eternal Father : even at the present moment He is acting as our Advocate; and it seems as if He knew not what else to do in Heaven, as St. Paul writes, but to move the Father to exercise mercy towards us : *ever living to make intercession for us*—(Heb. vii. 25). And the Apostle adds that this is the end for which our Saviour is ascended into Heaven : *that he may now appear in the presence of God for us*—(Heb. ix. 24). As rebels are driven away from the presence of their king, so should we sinners have never more been deemed worthy of admission into the Presence of our God, even so much as to ask His pardon; but Jesus, as our Redeemer, makes appearance for us in the Divine Presence, and, through His merits, obtains for us the grace that we had lost : *You are come to Jesus the Mediator, and to the sprinkling of blood, which speaketh better than Abel*—(Heb. xii. 24). Oh, with how much greater effect does the Blood of the Redeemer implore for us the Divine mercy, than did the blood of Abel plead for chastisement on Cain! My justice, said God to St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, is transformed into mercy by the vengeance taken on the innocent flesh of Jesus Christ. The Blood of this My Son pleads not with Me for vengeance, like the blood of Abel, but pleads only for mercy and pity; and at the sound of this voice My justice cannot but rest appeased. This Blood so binds the hands of Justice that, so to speak, it cannot stir to take that vengeance upon sins which it used to take before.

Forget not the kindness of thy surety—(Ecclus. xxix. 19). Ah, my sweet Saviour, Jesus, I was already incapable, after my sins, of making satisfaction to the Divine justice, when Thou, by Thy Death, wert willing to make satisfaction for me. Oh, what ingratitude would mine be now were I to be unmindful of this Thy so great mercy! No, my Redeemer, never will I be unmindful of it; I desire to be ever thanking Thee for it, and to show forth my thankfulness by loving Thee, and doing

all that I can to please Thee. Do Thou aid me by that grace which Thou hast, by so many sufferings, merited for me. I love Thee, my Jesus, my Love, my Hope!

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

IV.—HOW MUCH OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY SHOULD BE INCREASED BECAUSE SHE IS OUR MOTHER.

It is not without a meaning, nor by chance, that Mary's clients call her Mother; and indeed they seem unable to invoke her under any other name, and never tire of calling her Mother. Mother, yes! for she is truly our Mother; not indeed carnally, but spiritually, that is of our souls and of our salvation.

Sin, by depriving our souls of Divine grace, deprived them also of life. Jesus, our Redeemer, with an excess of mercy and love, came to restore this life by His own death on the Cross, as He Himself declared: *I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly*—(John x. 10). He says *more abundantly*; for, according to theologians, the benefit of Redemption far exceeded the injury done by Adam's sin. So that by reconciling us with God He made Himself the Father of souls in the law of grace, as it was foretold by the Prophet Isaias: *He shall be called the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace*—(Is. ix. 6). But if Jesus is the Father of our souls, Mary is also their Mother; for she, by giving us Jesus, gave us true life; and afterwards, by offering the life of her Son on Mount Calvary for our salvation, she brought us forth to the life of grace.

On two occasions, then, according to the holy Fathers, Mary became our spiritual Mother.

The first, according to Blessed Albert the Great, was when she merited to conceive in her virginal womb the

Son of God. St. Bernardine of Sienna says the same thing more distinctly, for he tells us " that when at the Annunciation the most Blessed Virgin gave the consent which was expected by the Eternal Word before becoming her Son, she from that moment asked our salvation of God with intense ardour, and took it to heart in such a way that from that moment, as a most loving Mother, she bore us in her womb."

In the second Chapter of St. Luke, the Evangelist, speaking of the birth of our Blessed Redeemer, says that *Mary brought forth her first-born son*—(Luke ii. 7). Then, remarks an author, " since the Evangelist asserts that on this occasion the most Holy Virgin brought forth her first-born, must we suppose that she had afterwards other children?" But then he replies to his own question, saying, " that as it is of Faith that Mary had no other children according to the flesh than Jesus, she must have had other spiritual children, and we are those children." This was revealed by our Lord to St. Gertrude, who was one day reading the above text, and was perplexed and could not understand how Mary, being the Mother of Jesus only, could be said to have brought forth her first-born. God explained it to her, saying that Jesus was Mary's first-born according to the flesh, but that all mankind were her second-born according to the spirit.

From what has been said we can understand that passage of the sacred Canticles : *Thy belly is like a heap of wheat, set about with lilies*—(Cant. vii. 2). This is explained by St. Ambrose, who says : " Although in the most pure womb of Mary there was but one grain of corn, which was Jesus Christ, yet it is called a heap of wheat, because all the elect were virtually contained in it " ; and as Mary was also to be their Mother, in bringing forth Jesus, He was called, and truly was, the First-born of many brethren. And the Abbot William writes in the same sense, saying : " that Mary, in bringing forth Jesus, our Saviour and our Life, brought forth many unto salvation ; and by giving birth to Life itself, she gave life to many."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

X.—HOW MUCH JESUS CHRIST DESERVES TO BE LOVED BY US ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN INSTITUTING THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

I.

In order to excite us to receive Him in the Holy Communion, Jesus not only exhorts us to do so by many invitations—*Come, eat my bread; and drink the wine which I have mingled for you*—(Prov. ix. 5); *Eat, O friends, and drink*—(Cant. v. 1)—speaking of this Heavenly Bread and Wine—but He even gives us a formal precept: *Take ye, and eat; this is my body.* And more than this; that we may go and receive Him, He entices us with the promise of Paradise. *He that eateth my flesh hath everlasting life*—(John vi. 55). *He that eateth this bread shall live for ever*—(John vi. 59). And, still more, He threatens us with hell, and exclusion from Paradise if we refuse to communicate. *Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man you shall not have life in you*—(John vi. 54). These invitations, these promises, these threats, all proceed from the great desire He has to come to us in this Sacrament.

But why is it that Jesus so desires that we should receive Him in the Holy Communion? Here is the reason. St. Denis says that love always sighs after and tends to union; and so also says St. Thomas: "Lovers desire to become one." Friends who really love each other would like to be so united as to become one person. Now this is what the infinite love of God for man has done; that He should not only give us Himself in the eternal kingdom, but even in this life permit men to possess Him in the most intimate union, by giving them Himself, whole and entire, under the appearance of bread in this Sacrament. He stands as though behind a wall, and looks, as it were, through a closed lattice:

Behold he standeth behind our wall, looking through the windows, looking through the lattices—(Cant. ii. 9). It is true we do not see Him; but He sees us, and is there really present: He is present in order that we may possess Him: but He hides Himself from us to make us desire Him: and as long as we have not reached our true country, Jesus desires to give Himself wholly to us, and to remain united with us.

II.

He could not satisfy His love by giving Himself to the human race by His Incarnation and by His Passion, dying for all men upon the Cross; but desired to find out a way whereby He might give Himself entirely to each one of us in particular; and for this end He instituted the Sacrament of the Altar in order to unite Himself wholly to each: *He that eateth my flesh*, He said, *abideth in me and I in him*—(John vi. 57). In the Holy Communion Jesus unites Himself to the soul, and the soul to Jesus; and this is not a union of mere affection, but it is a true and real union. Hence St. Francis de Sales says: "In no other action can the Saviour be considered more tender or more loving than in this, in which He annihilates Himself, so to say, and reduces Himself to food, in order to penetrate our souls and to unite Himself to the hearts of His faithful." St. John Chrysostom says that Jesus Christ, through the ardent love He bore us, desired so to unite Himself with us as to become one and the same thing with us. "He mingled Himself with us that we might be one thing; for this is the property of those who ardently love."

Saturday after Low Sunday

Morning Meditation.

MARY'S CHARITY TOWARDS HER NEIGHBOUR.

All who love Me love what I love, said Jesus to St. Catharine of Genoa. Now, as there never was and never will be any one who loved God as much as Mary loved Him, so there never was and never will be anyone who loved her neighbour as much as she did. Great was the mercy of Mary towards the wretched when she was an exile here on earth, but far greater is it now that she reigns in Heaven.

I.

Love of God and love of our neighbour are commanded by the same precept: *And this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God love also his brother*—(1 John iv. 21). St. Thomas says that the reason for this is that he who loves God loves all that God loves. St. Catharine of Genoa one day said: "Lord, Thou willest that I should love my neighbour, and I can love none but Thee." God answered her in these words: "All who love Me love what I love." But as there never was, and never will be, any one who loved God as much as Mary loved Him, so there never was, and never will be, any one who loved her neighbour as much as she did.

Father Cornelius à Lapide, on these words of the Canticles, *King Solomon hath made him a litter of the wood of Libanus . . . the midst he covered with charity for the daughters of Jerusalem*—(Cant. iii. 9, 10), says "this litter was Mary's bosom, in which the Incarnate Word dwelt, filling it with charity for the daughters of Jerusalem; for Christ, Who is love itself, inspired the Blessed Virgin with charity in its highest degree, that she might succour all who had recourse to her."

So great was Mary's charity when on earth that she succoured the needy without even being asked; as was the case at the marriage-feast of Cana, when she told her Son that family's distress, *They have no wine*—(John ii. 3), and asked Him to work a miracle. Oh, with what speed did she fly when there was question of relieving her neighbour! When she went to the house of Elizabeth to fulfil an office of charity, *she went into the hill-country with haste*—(Luke i. 39). She could not, however, more fully display the greatness of her charity than she did in the offering which she made of her Son to death for our salvation. On this subject St. Bonaventure says: "Mary so loved the world as to give her only-begotten Son." Hence St. Anselm exclaims: "O blessed amongst women, thy purity surpasses that of the Angels, and thy compassion that of the Saints!" "Nor has this love of Mary for us," says St. Bonaventure, "diminished now that she is in Heaven; but it has increased, for now she better sees the miseries of men." And therefore the Saint goes on to say: "Great was the mercy of Mary towards the wretched when she was still in exile on earth; but far greater is it now that she reigns in Heaven."

O Mother of mercy, thou wast all filled with the love of God, obtain for me His pure and holy love. Thou wast all love towards thy neighbour, obtain for me charity towards my neighbour. O Mary, make me a Saint.

II.

St. Agnes assured St. Bridget that "there was no one who prayed without receiving grace through the charity of the Blessed Virgin." Unfortunate, indeed, should we be, did not Mary intercede for us! Jesus Himself, addressing the same Saint, said: "Were it not for the prayers of My Mother, there would be no hope of mercy."

Blessed is he, says the Divine Mother, who listens to my instructions, pays attention to my charity, and, in imitation of me, exercises it himself towards others: *Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth*

daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors —(Prov. viii. 34). St. Gregory Nazianzen assures us that "there is nothing by which we can with greater certainty gain the affection of Mary than by charity towards our neighbour." Therefore, as God exhorts us, saying, *Be ye merciful, as your Father is also merciful* —(Luke vi. 36), so also does Mary seem to say to all her children : " Be ye merciful, as your Mother is also merciful." It is certain that our charity towards our neighbour will be the measure of that which God and Mary will show us : *Give, and it shall be given to you. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.*—(Luke vi. 38). St. Methodius used to say, " Give to the poor, and receive Paradise." For the Apostle writes that charity towards our neighbour renders us happy both in this world and in the next : *But piety is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*—(1 Tim. iv. 8). St. John Chrysostom, on these words of Proverbs, *He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord*—(Prov. xix. 17), makes a remark to the same effect, saying, " He who assists the needy makes God his debtor."

O Mother of Mercy, thou art full of charity for all; forget not my miseries; thou seest them full well. Recommend me to God, who denies thee nothing. Obtain for me the grace to imitate thee in holy charity, as well towards God as towards my neighbour. Amen.

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

V.—HOW MUCH OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY SHOULD BE INCREASED BECAUSE SHE IS OUR MOTHER.

The second occasion on which Mary became our spiritual Mother, and brought us forth to the life of grace, was when she offered to the Eternal Father the life of her beloved Son on Mount Calvary, with so bitter sorrow

and suffering. So that St. Augustine declares that "as she then co-operated by her love in the birth of the faithful to the life of grace, she became the spiritual Mother of all who are members of the one Head, Christ Jesus." This we are given to understand by the following verse of the sacred Canticles, and which refers to the most Blessed Virgin : *They have made me keeper in the vineyards; my vineyard I have not kept*—(Cant. i. 5). St. William says that "Mary, in order that she might save many souls, exposed her own to death"; meaning that to save us she sacrificed the life of her Son. And who but Jesus was the soul of Mary? He was her life, and all her love. And therefore the Prophet Simeon foretold that *a sword of sorrow would one day transpierce her own most blessed soul*—(Luke ii. 35). And this was precisely the lance which transpierced the side of Jesus, Who was the soul of Mary. Then it was that this most Blessed Virgin brought us forth by her sorrows to eternal life : and thus we can all call ourselves the children of the sorrows of Mary. Our most loving Mother was always, and in all things, united to the will of God. "And therefore," says St. Bonaventure, "when she saw the love of the Eternal Father towards men to be so great that, in order to save them He willed the death of His very own Son; and, further, seeing the love of the Son in wishing to die for us, in order to conform herself to this excessive love of both the Father and the Son towards the human race, she also with her entire will offered, and consented to, the death of her Son, in order that we might be saved."

It is true that, according to the Prophecy of Isaias, Jesus in dying for the redemption of the human race, chose to be alone. *I have trodden the winepress alone*—(Is. lxiii. 3), but, seeing the ardent desire of Mary to aid in the salvation of man, He disposed it so that she, by the sacrifice and offering of the life of her Jesus, should co-operate in our salvation, and thus become the Mother of our souls. This our Saviour signified, when, before expiring, He looked down from the Cross on His Mother and on the disciple St. John, who stood at its foot, and, first addressing Mary, He said : *Behold thy*

son—(John xix. 26); as it were, saying: Behold, the whole human race, which by the offer thou makest of My life for the salvation of all, is even now being born to the life of grace. Then, turning to the disciple, Jesus said, *Behold thy mother*—(John xix. 27). "By these words," says St. Bernardine of Sienna, "Mary, by reason of the love she bore them, became the Mother, not only of St. John, but of all men." And Silveira remarks that St. John himself, in stating this fact in his Gospel, says: "After that He saith to the disciple *Behold thy mother.*" Here observe well that Jesus Christ did not address Himself to St. John, but to the *disciple*, in order to show that He then gave Mary to *all who are His disciples*, that is to say to all Christians, that she might be their Mother. "John is but the name of one, whereas the word disciple is applicable to all; therefore our Lord makes use of a name common to all, to show that Mary was given as a Mother to all."

The Church applies to Mary these words of the sacred Canticles: *I am the mother of fair love*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 24); and a commentator explaining them says that the Blessed Virgin's love renders our souls beautiful in the sight of God, and also makes her, as a most loving Mother, receive us as her children, "she being all love towards those whom she has thus adopted." And what Mother, exclaims St. Bonaventure, loves her children and attends to their welfare as thou lovest us and carest for us, O most sweet Queen! "For dost thou not love us and seek our welfare far more without comparison than any earthly mother?"

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XI.—HOW MUCH JESUS CHRIST DESERVES TO BE LOVED BY US ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN INSTITUTING THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

I.

"It was Thy wish, in short," says St. Laurence Justinian, "O God, enamoured of our souls, to make, by

means of this Sacrament, Thine own Heart, by an inseparable union, one and the same heart with ours!" St. Bernardine of Sienna adds that "the gift of Jesus Christ to us as our food was the last step of His love, since He gives Himself to us in order to unite Himself wholly with us, in the same way as food becomes united with him who partakes of it." Oh, how delighted is Jesus Christ to be united with our souls! He one day said to His beloved servant, Margaret of Ypres, after Communion: "See, my daughter, the beautiful union that exists between Me and thee! Come, then, love Me; and let us remain ever united in love, and let us never separate again."

We must, then, be persuaded that a soul can neither do, or think of doing, any thing which gives greater pleasure to Jesus Christ, than to communicate frequently with dispositions suitable to the great Guest Whom she has to receive into her heart. I have said *suitable*, not indeed *worthy* dispositions; for if worthy were necessary who could ever communicate? Another God would alone be worthy to receive God. By *suitable* I mean such dispositions as become a miserable creature clothed with the unhappy flesh of Adam. Ordinarily speaking, it is sufficient if a person communicates in a state of grace, and with a great desire of growing in the love of Christ. St. Francis de Sales said: "It is by love alone that we must receive Jesus Christ in the Communion, since it is through love alone that He gives Himself to us." For the rest, with regard to the number of times a person should communicate, in this he should be guided by the advice of his spiritual father. Nevertheless, we should be aware that no state of life or employment, neither the married state nor business, prevents frequent Communion, when the director thinks it advisable, as Pope Innocent XI. has declared in his Decree of 1679, when he says: "Frequent Communion must be left to the judgment of the confessors . . who, for lay persons in business or in the married state, must

recommend it according as they see it will be profitable for their salvation."*

II.

We must next understand that there is nothing from which we can derive such profit as from Holy Communion. The Eternal Father has made Jesus Christ the Possessor of all His own heavenly treasures. *The Father hath given all things into his hands*—(John xiii. 3). Hence, when Jesus Christ comes to a soul in the Holy Communion, He brings with Him boundless treasures of grace; and consequently after Communion we can justly say, *Now all good things came to me together with it.*

St. Denis says that the Sacrament of the Eucharist is far more powerful for the sanctification of souls than all other spiritual means of grace; and St. Vincent Ferrer, that one Communion does more for the soul than a week's fasting on bread and water.

In the first place, as the Council of Trent teaches, Communion is that great remedy which frees us from daily faults, and preserves us against mortal sins. It is said *from daily faults*, because, according to St. Thomas, a man is excited by means of this Sacrament to make acts of love, by which venial sins are forgiven. And it is said that we are *preserved from mortal sins*, because Communion increases grace, which will preserve us from great faults. Hence, Innocent III says that Jesus Christ delivered us from the *power of sin* by His Passion, but that by the Eucharist He delivers us from the *power of sinning*.

* "Frequent and daily Communion, inasmuch as it is most pleasing to Christ Our Lord and to the Catholic Church, is open to all the Faithful of every class and condition; so that nobody who is in the state of grace, and approaches the Sacred Table with a pure and devout intention should be prohibited therefrom.

"The right intention consists in this:—That whoever approaches the Sacred Table should do so—not from habit or vainglory, or impelled by human respect, but from a desire to please God, and to be closely united to Him, and to provide a Divine remedy for their infirmities and defects . . .

"In order that daily Communion should be promoted with greater prudence and more fruitful results, it is necessary that the advice of the confessor should previously be obtained. Let confessors beware, however, lest they should dissuade anyone from daily Communion who is in the state of grace and approaches it with a right intention . . . "—*Extract from the Decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council on the Reception of Daily Communion which was graciously ratified, confirmed and ordered to be issued by His Holiness Pope Pius X, December 17, 1905.*

Second Sunday after Easter

Morning Meditation.

"I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD."

(Gospel of Sunday. John x. 11, 16).

Jesus said of Himself : *I am the good shepherd.* The work of a good shepherd is nothing more than to guide his flock to good pastures, and to guard them from wolves. But what shepherd, O sweet Redeemer, ever had mercy like Thee! What shepherd would ever give his life for his sheep? Thou alone, because Thou art a God of infinite love, canst say : *I lay down my life for my sheep.*

I.

Thus spoke Jesus of Himself : *I am the good Shepherd* —(John x. 11). The work of a good shepherd is nothing more than to guide his flock to good pastures, and to guard them from wolves; but what shepherd, O sweet Redeemer, ever had mercy like Thee? What shepherd has ever given his life to save his flocks and deliver them from the punishment they had deserved?

Who in his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree; that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice; by whose stripes you were healed—(1 Peter ii. 24). To heal us of our sicknesses this good Shepherd took upon Himself all our ills, and paid our debts in His own person, dying in agony upon a Cross. It was this excess of love towards us, His sheep, which made St. Ignatius, the Martyr, burn with desire to give his life for Jesus Christ, saying : "My Love is crucified! What! has my God been willing to die on a Cross for me, and cannot I desire to die for Him?" And, in truth, was it a great thing the Martyrs did in giving their lives for Jesus

Christ, when He died for love of them? Oh, how that death endured for them by Jesus Christ made sweet to them all their torments—stripes, piercing nails, fiery plates of iron, and most agonizing deaths!

But the love of this Good Shepherd was not satisfied with giving His life for His sheep; He desired also, after His death, to leave them His flesh itself, first sacrificed upon the Cross, that it might be food and pasture of their souls. "The burning love He bore to us," says Saint John Chrysostom, "induced Him to unite and make Himself one thing with us."

Remember, then, my Jesus, that I am one of those sheep for whom Thou hast given Thy life. Ah! cast on me one of those looks of pity with which Thou didst once regard me, when Thou wast dying on the Cross for me. Look on me and change me, and save me. Thou hast called Thyself the loving Shepherd, Who, finding the lost sheep, takes it with joy and carries it on His shoulders, and then calls His friends to rejoice with Him. I love Thee, my Good Shepherd; never permit me to be again separated from Thee.

II.

When this Good Shepherd sees a sheep lost, what does He not do, what means does He not take, to recover it? He does not cease to seek it until He finds it. *If he shall lose one of them doth he not go after that which was lost until he find it*—(Luke xv. 4). And when He has found it, rejoicing He places it upon His shoulders, that it may be lost no more; and, calling to Him His friends and neighbours, i.e., the Angels and Saints, He invites them to rejoice with Him for having found the sheep that was lost. Who, then, will not love with all his affections this good Lord Who shows Himself thus loving to sinners who have turned their backs upon Him, and destroyed themselves of their own accord?

O my Saviour, worthy of all love, behold at Thy feet a sheep that was lost! I had left Thee, but Thou hast not abandoned me; Thou hast left no means untried to recover me. What would have become of me if Thou hadst not thought of seeking me? Woe is me! How

long a time have I lived far from Thee! Now, through Thy mercy, I trust that I am in Thy grace; and as I first fled from Thee, now I desire nothing but to love Thee, and to live and die embracing Thy feet. But while I live I am in danger of leaving Thee; oh, bind me, chain me with the bond of Thy holy love, and cease not to seek for me so long as I live on this earth. *I have gone astray like a sheep that was lost; seek thy servant* —(Ps. cxviii. 176) O Mary, thou advocate of sinners, obtain for me holy perseverance.

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

VI.—HOW MUCH OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY SHOULD BE INCREASED BECAUSE SHE IS OUR MOTHER.

O blessed are they who live under the protection of so loving and powerful a Mother! The Prophet David, although she was not yet born, sought salvation from God by dedicating himself as a son of Mary, and thus prayed: *Save the son of thy handmaid*—(Ps. lxxxv. 16). "Of what handmaid?" asks St. Augustine, and he answers, "Of her who said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord.*" "And who," says Blessed Cardinal Bellarmine, "would ever dare to snatch us from the bosom of Mary, when we have taken refuge there? What power of hell, or what temptation, can overcome us if we place our confidence in the patronage of this great Mother, God's Mother and ours?" There are some who say that when the whale sees its young in danger, either from tempests or pursuers, it opens its mouth and swallows them. This is precisely what Novarinus asserts of Mary: "When the storms of temptations rage, the most compassionate Mother of the faithful, with maternal tenderness, protects them as it were in her own bosom until she has brought them into the harbour of salvation."

O most loving Mother! O most compassionate Mother!

Be thou ever blessed! And ever blessed be God, Who has given thee to us for our Mother, and for a secure refuge in all dangers of this life! Our Blessed Lady herself, in a vision, addressed these words to St. Bridget: "As a mother, on seeing her son in the midst of the swords of his enemies, would use every effort to save him, so do I, and will do, for all sinners who seek my mercy." Thus it is that in every engagement with the infernal powers we shall always certainly conquer by having recourse to the Mother of God, who is also our Mother, saying and repeating again and again: "We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God." Oh, how many victories have not the faithful gained over hell by having recourse to Mary with this short but most powerful prayer! Thus it was that the great servant of God, Sister Mary Crucified, of the Order of St. Benedict, always overcame the devils.

Be of good heart, then, all you who are children of Mary. Remember that she accepts as her children all those who choose to be so. Rejoice! Why do you fear to be lost when such a Mother defends and protects you? "Say, then, O my soul, with great confidence: I will rejoice and be glad; for whatever the judgment to be pronounced on me may be, it depends on and must come from my Brother and Mother." "Thus," says St. Bonaventure, "it is that each one who loves this good Mother, and relies on her protection, should animate himself to confidence, remembering that Jesus is our Brother, and Mary our Mother." The same thought makes St. Anselm cry out with joy, and encourage us, saying: "O happy confidence! O safe refuge! The Mother of God is my Mother! How firm, then, should be our confidence, since our salvation depends on the judgment of a good Brother and a tender Mother." It is, then, our Mother who calls us, and says, in these words of the Book of Proverbs: *He that is a little one, let him come to me*—(Prov. ix. 4). Children have always on their lips their mother's name; and in every fear, in every danger, they immediately cry out: Mother! Mother! Ah, most sweet Mary! Ah, most loving Mother, this is precisely what thou desirest: that

we should become children, and call on thee in every danger, and at all times have recourse to thee, because thou desirest to help and save us, as thou hast saved all who have had recourse to thee.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XII.—HOW MUCH JESUS CHRIST DESERVES TO BE LOVED BY US ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE HE HAS SHOWN US IN INSTITUTING THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

I.

This Sacrament of the Eucharist, above all others, inflames our souls with Divine love. *God is love*—(1 John iv. 8). And He is a fire which consumes all earthly affections in our hearts. *He is a consuming fire*—(Heb. xii. 29). It was for this very purpose, namely, to enkindle this fire, the Son of God came upon earth. *I am come to cast fire on the earth;* and He added that He desired nothing but to see this fire enkindled in our souls: *And what will I but that it be kindled?*—(Luke xii. 49). And oh, what flames of love does not Jesus Christ light up in the heart of every one who receives Him devoutly in this Sacrament! St. Catherine of Sienna once saw the Host in a priest's hand as a globe of fire; and the Saint was astonished that the hearts of all men were not burned up and, as it were, reduced to ashes by such a flame. Such brilliant rays issued from the face of St. Rose of Lima, after Communion, as to dazzle the eyes of those who saw her; and the heat from her mouth was so intense that a hand held near it was scorched. It is related of St. Wenceslaus that by merely visiting the churches where the Blessed Sacrament was kept, he was inflamed by such an ardour that his servant, who accompanied him, did not feel the cold if, when walking on the snow, he trod in the footsteps of the Saint. And St. John Chrysostom says that the most Holy

Sacrament is a burning fire; so that when we leave the altar we breathe forth flames of love which make us objects of terror to hell.

O God of love, O infinite Lover, worthy of infinite love, tell me what more canst Thou do to make men love Thee? It was not sufficient for Thee to become Man, and to subject Thyself to all our miseries; not sufficient to shed all Thy Blood for us in torments, and then to die overwhelmed with sorrow, upon a Cross, destined for the most shameful malefactors. Thou didst, at last, oblige Thyself to be hidden under the species of bread and wine, to become our Food, and be united with each one of us. Tell me, I repeat, what more canst Thou do to make Thyself loved by us? Ah, wretched shall we be if we do not love Thee in this life! And when we shall have entered into eternity what remorse shall we not feel for not having loved Thee! My Jesus, I will not die without loving Thee, and loving Thee exceedingly!

II.

The spouse of the Canticles said: *He brought me into the cellar of wine, he set in order charity in me*—(Cant. ii. 4). St. Gregory of Nyssa says that Communion is precisely this cellar of wine in which the soul becomes so inebriated with Divine love that she forgets and loses sight of creatures; and this is that languishing with love of which the spouse again speaks: *Stay me up with flowers: compass me about with apples, because I languish with love*—(Cant. ii. 5). Some one will say: "But this is the very reason why I do not communicate frequently, because I see that I am so cold in the love of God." Gerson answers such a one by saying: "Do you, therefore, because you are cold, willingly keep away from the fire? Rather, because you feel yourself cold, should you so much the more frequently approach this Sacrament, if you really desire to love Jesus Christ." "Although it be with lukewarmness," wrote St. Bonaventure, "still approach, trusting in the mercy of God. The more one feels himself sick, the greater need has he of a physician."

In like manner, St. Francis de Sales: "Two sorts of

persons ought to go frequently to Communion : the perfect in order to remain so ; and the imperfect, in order to become perfect." But for frequent Communion it is at least necessary to have a great desire to become a Saint and to grow in the love of Jesus Christ. Our Lord said once to St. Matilda : " When you go to Communion desire all the love which a soul has ever had for Me, and I will receive your love according to your desire."

My Jesus, I am sorry and am pained for having so greatly offended Thee. But now I love Thee above all things. I love Thee more than myself, and I consecrate to Thee all my affections. Do Thou, who inspirest me with this desire, give me also grace to accomplish it. My Jesus, my Jesus, I desire nothing of Thee but Thyself. Now that Thou hast drawn me to Thy love, I leave all, I renounce all, and I bind myself to Thee : Thou alone art sufficient for me. O Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me, and make me a Saint ! Add this also to the many wonders you have done in changing sinners into Saints.

Monday—Second Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

CHARITY TO BE PRACTISED IN WORDS.

St. Bernard says the tongue of a detractor is a three-edged sword. It destroys the reputation of the neighbour ; it wounds the souls of those who listen to the detraction ; and it kills the soul of the detractor himself by depriving him of Divine grace. *If a serpent bite in silence, he is nothing better that backbiteth secretly* —(Eccles. x. 11).

I.

To practise fraternal charity in words, you must, above all, abstain from every species of detraction. *The tale-bearer*, says the Holy Ghost, *shall defile his own soul, and shall be hated by all*—(Ecclus. xxi. 31). Yes; he shall be an object of hatred to God and to men, and even to those who for their own amusement applaud and encourage his slanderous language. Even they shall shun him; because they justly fear that as in their presence he has detracted others, so before others he will slander them. St. Jerome says that some who have renounced other vices cannot abstain from this. "They who have abandoned other sins continue to fall into the sin of detraction." Would to God that even amongst those consecrated to God there were not to be found some whose tongues are so sharp that they cannot speak without wounding the character of a neighbour! God grant that such people may not meet the fate of a certain slanderer, who, according to Thomas Cantimpratensis, died in a fit of rage, and in the act of lacerating his tongue with his teeth. St. Bernard speaks of another slanderer who attempted to defame the character of St. Malachy; his tongue instantly swelled and became filled with worms. In this miserable state the unhappy man died after seven days.

But how dear to God and to men are those who speak well of all! St Mary Magdalene de Pazzi used to say that if she knew anyone who had never in his whole life spoken ill of a neighbour, she would have him canonised. Be careful, then, never to utter a word that savours of detraction. Above all, be on your guard against every expression that is in the slightest degree apt to injure the character of your Superiors. By speaking ill of them, you would destroy in your companions the spirit of obedience, as you would diminish respect for their judgment and authority.

The sin of detraction is committed, not only by imputing to others what is not true, by exaggerating their defects, or by making known their hidden faults, but also by representing their virtuous actions as defective, or by ascribing them to a bad motive. It is also

detraction to deny the good works of others, or to question their claims to the just praise bestowed upon them. To render their calumnies more credible, some people begin by praise and end with slander. Such a person, they say, has a great deal of talent, but he is proud; he is very generous, but at the same time very vindictive.

Ah, my God, look not upon my sins, but upon Jesus, Thy Son, Who has sacrificed His life for my salvation. For Jesus' sake have pity upon me, and pardon all the offences I have committed against Thee, but especially those I have committed by my want of charity towards my neighbour. Destroy in me, O Lord, whatever displeases Thee, and give me a sincere desire to please Thee in all things.

II.

Let it be your care ever to speak well of all. Speak of others as you would wish to be spoken of by others. With regard to the absent, observe the excellent rule of St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi: "Never to utter in their absence what you would not say in their presence." And should you ever hear someone speak ill of others, be careful neither to encourage his uncharitableness nor to appear pleased with his language; otherwise you will partake of his guilt. You should either reprove him, or change the subject of conversation, or withdraw, or, at least, pay no attention to him. *Hedge in thy ears with thorns*, says the Holy Ghost; *hear not a wicked tongue*—(Ecclus. xxviii. 28). Against detraction, hedge in your ears with thorns, that it may not enter. Whenever, then, you hear a person speak ill of others, it is necessary to show, at least by silence, by your countenance, or by downcast eyes, that you are not pleased with the conversation. Conduct yourself always in such a way that no one will in future dare attack the character of another in your presence. And when it is in your power, charity requires of you to take the part of the person who is detracted. *Thy lips are as a scarlet lace*—(Cant. iv. 3). My spouse, says the Lord, I will have thy lips as a scarlet lace; that is, according to the explanation of

St. Gregory of Nyssa, your words must be full of charity, so as to cover as much as possible the defects of others, or at least to excuse their intention, if their actions be inexcusable. "Excuse the intention," says St. Bernard, "if you cannot excuse the act." The Abbot Constabile, as Surius relates, was called "The covering of his brethren." For this holy monk, as often as he heard any one speak of the defects of others, sought to cover and excuse them. Such, too, was the practice of St. Teresa. Of her her Religious used to say that in her presence their character was secure, because she would defend them.

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

VII.—THE GREATNESS OF THE LOVE THIS MOTHER BEARS US.

Since Mary is our Mother, we may consider how great is the love she bears us. Love towards our children is a necessary impulse of nature; and St. Thomas says that this is the reason why the Divine law imposes on children the obligation of loving their parents, but gives no express command that parents should love their children; for nature itself has so strongly implanted it in all creatures that, as St. Ambrose remarks, "we know that a mother will expose herself to danger for her children," and even the most savage beasts cannot do otherwise than love their young. It is said that even tigers, on hearing the cry of their cubs taken by hunters, will go into the sea and swim until they reach the vessel in which they are. Since the very tigers, says our most loving Mother Mary, cannot forget their young, how can I forget to love you, my children? And even, she adds, were such a thing possible as that a mother should forget to love her child, it is not possible that I should cease to love a soul that has become my child: *Can a woman*

forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee—(Is. xlix. 15).

Mary is our Mother, not, as we have already observed, according to the flesh, but by love : *I am the mother of fair love*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 24); hence it is the love only that she bears us that makes her our Mother; and therefore a writer remarks that "she glories in being a Mother of love, because she is all love towards us whom she has adopted for her children." And who can ever tell the love that Mary bears us miserable creatures? Arnold of Chartres tells us that "at the death of Jesus Christ she desired with immense ardour to die with her Son, for love of us"; so much so, adds St. Ambrose, that whilst "her Son was hanging on the Cross, Mary offered herself to the executioners," to give her life for us.

But let us consider the reason of this love; for then we shall be better able to understand how much this good Mother loves us.

The first reason for the great love that Mary bears to men is the great love that she bears to God; love towards God and love towards our neighbour belong to the same commandment, as expressed by St. John : *this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother*—(1 John iv. 21); so that in proportion as the one becomes greater the other also increases. What have not the Saints done for their neighbour in consequence of their love towards God! Read only the account of the labours of St. Francis Xavier in the Indies, where, in order to aid the souls of these poor barbarians and bring them to God, he exposed himself to a thousand dangers, clambering amongst the mountains, and seeking out these poor creatures in the caves in which they dwelt like wild beasts. See a St. Francis de Sales, who, in order to convert the heretics of the province of Chablais, risked his life every morning for a whole year, crawling on his hands and knees over a frozen beam, in order that he might preach to them on the opposite side of a river; a St. Paulinus, who delivered himself up as a slave in order that he might obtain liberty for the son of a poor

widow; a St. Fidelis, who, in order to draw the heretics of a certain place to God, persisted in going to preach to them, though he knew it would cost him his life. The Saints, then, because they loved God much, did much for their neighbour; but who ever loved God as much as Mary? She loved Him more in the first moment of her existence than all the Saints and Angels ever loved Him, or will love Him. Our Blessed Lady herself revealed to Sister Mary Crucified that the fire of love with which she was inflamed towards God was such that if the heavens and earth were placed in it they would be instantly consumed; so that the ardours of the Seraphim, in comparison with it, were but as fresh breezes. And as amongst all the blessed spirits there is not one that loves God more than Mary, so we neither have, nor can have, any one who, after God, loves us as much as this most loving Mother; and if we concentrate all the love that mothers bear their children, husbands and wives one another, all the love of Angels and Saints for their clients, it does not equal the love of Mary towards a single soul. Father Nieremberg says that the love that all mothers have ever had for their children is but a shadow in comparison with the love that Mary bears to each one of us; and he adds that she alone loves us more than all the Angels and Saints put together.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XIII.—ON THE GREAT CONFIDENCE WE OUGHT TO HAVE IN THE LOVE JESUS CHRIST HAS SHOWN US AND IN ALL HE HAS DONE FOR US.

I.

David placed all his hope of salvation in his future Redeemer, and said: *Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth*—(Ps. xxx. 6). But how much more ought

we to place our confidence in Jesus Christ, now that He has come and has accomplished the work of Redemption! Hence each one of us should say, and repeat again and again with greater confidence: *Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth.*

If we have great reason to fear everlasting death on account of our sins against God, we have on the other hand far greater reason to hope for everlasting life through the merits of Jesus Christ, which are infinitely more powerful for our salvation than our sins are for our damnation. We have sinned, and have deserved hell; but the Redeemer has come to take upon Himself all our offences, and to make satisfaction for them by His sufferings: *Surely he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows*—(Is. liii. 4).

In the same unhappy moment in which we sinned, God had already written against us the sentence of eternal death; but what has our merciful Redeemer done? *Blotting out the handwriting of the decree which was against us . . . the same he took out of the way, fastening it to the cross*—(Col. ii. 14). He cancelled by His Blood the decree of our condemnation, and then fastened it to the Cross, in order that, when we look at the sentence of our damnation for the sins we have committed, we may at the same time see the Cross on which Jesus Christ died and blotted out this sentence by His Blood, and so regain hope of pardon and everlasting life.

II.

Oh, how far more powerfully does the Blood of Jesus Christ speak for us, and obtain mercy for us from God, than did the blood of Abel speak against Cain! *You are come to Jesus, the mediator of the New Testament, and to the sprinkling of blood, which speaketh better than that of Abel*—(Heb. xii. 24). As if the Apostle had said: "O sinners, happy are you to be able, after you have sinned, to have recourse to Jesus crucified, Who has shed all His Blood in order to become the Mediator of peace between sinners and God, and to obtain pardon for them! Your iniquities cry out against you, but the

Blood of the Redeemer pleads in your favour; and the Divine justice cannot but be appeased by the voice of this Precious Blood."

It is true that we shall have to render a rigorous account to the Eternal Judge of all our sins. But who is to be our Judge? *The Father hath committed all judgments to the Son*—(John v. 22). Let us comfort ourselves; the Eternal Father has committed our judgment to our own Redeemer. Therefore St. Paul encourages us, saying: *Who is he that shall condemn? Christ Jesus who died . . . who also maketh intercession for us*—(Rom. viii. 34). Who is the Judge to condemn us? It is that same Saviour Who, in order not to condemn us to everlasting death, vouchsafed Himself to be condemned and to die; and not content with this, at this moment intercedes with His Father for our salvation. Hence St. Thomas of Villanova says: "What do you fear, O sinner, if you detest your sin? How will He condemn you, Who died in order not to condemn you? How will He cast you from Him, if you return to His feet, He Who came from Heaven to seek you at the very time you were flying from Him?

Tuesday—Second Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

CHARITY TO BE PRACTISED IN WORDS.

The sowers of discord are objects of abomination in God's sight: *Six things there are which the Lord hateth and the seventh his soul detesteth . . . him that soweth discord among brethren*—(Prov. vi. 16, 19). An uncharitable word that proceeds from passion may be excusable, but how can the Almighty bear with him

who sows discord and disturbs the peace of a community? *Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbour? Let it die within thee*—(Ecclus xix. 10).

I.

Be careful never to mention to anyone that another has spoken ill of him: for tale-bearing of this kind sometimes occasions disputes and aversions which last for a long time. Oh! how frightful the account which tale-bearers must render to God! The sowers of discord are objects of abomination in His sight. *Six things there are which the Lord hateth, and the seventh his soul detesteth . . . him that soweth discord among brethren*—(Prov. vi. 16, 19). An uncharitable word that proceeds from passion may be excusable. But how can the Almighty bear with him who sows discord and disturbs the peace of a community? Listen to the advice of the Holy Ghost: *Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbour? Let it die within thee*—(Ecclus. xix. 10). The words that you hear against another must not only be kept to yourself, but must even die and be buried within you. You must be careful, then, never to give the slightest intimation of what you have heard. For a single word, a nod, a simple hint, may lead others to a knowledge, or at least to a suspicion, of the faults that were mentioned to you.

Some appear to suffer the pangs of death until they have disclosed the secrets communicated to them; as if these secrets were so many thorns that wound their very heart until they are drawn out. You should never mention the hidden defects of others to any one except to Superiors, and not even to them unless the reparation of the injury done to the community, or the good of the one who has committed the fault, require that it should be made known to the Superior.

Moreover, in your conversation you must be careful never to wound, even by jests, the feelings of another. Jests that offend a neighbour are opposed to charity, and to the words of Jesus Christ: *All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them*—(Matt. vii. 12). You certainly would not like to

be made an object of derision and of mockery before your companions. Abstain then from casting ridicule on others.

Endeavour also to avoid as much as possible all disputes. Sometimes trifles give occasion to arguments that end in disputes and injurious language. There are some who violate charity by proposing, through the spirit of contradiction, certain topics of debate which give rise to useless disputation. *Strive not*, says the Wise Man, *in a matter which doth not concern thee*—(Ecclus. xi. 9).

II.

But some will say that in every debate they defend the right side of the question, and that they cannot listen in silence to assertions utterly destitute of foundation. I answer in the words of Blessed Cardinal Bellarmine: "An ounce of charity is of more value than a hundred cartloads of reason." Blessed Egidius used to say that in such controversies to submit is to conquer; because submission evinces a superiority in virtue and preserves peace. Surely the preservation of peace is of far greater importance than the empty honour of a wordy victory. Hence St. Ephrem used to say that to maintain peace he always yielded to his adversary in disputation. St. Joseph Calasanctius, therefore, advises "all who desire peace never to contradict anyone."

But, if you love charity, endeavour to be affable and meek to all. Meekness is the characteristic virtue of the lamb; it is the beloved virtue of Jesus Christ, Who, through a love of meekness, took the appellation of *Lamb*. In your conversation and intercourse with others be agreeable not only to those over you, but to all, and particularly to those who have offended you, who oppose your wishes, or displease you by their roughness of manner, or by their forgetfulness of past favours. *Charity is patient: beareth all things*—(1 Cor. xiii. 4, 7). Whoever, then, bears not with the defects of his neighbour cannot have true charity. The most perfect souls are not free from all defects. You yourself are subject to faults; and notwithstanding your manifold imperfections you expect to be treated with charity and compassion.

You therefore should, according to the advice of the Apostle, compassionate the defects of others. *Bear ye one another's burdens*—(Gal. vi. 2). A mother, because she loves them, submits in patience to the insolence of her children. It is by the manner in which you bear the burdens others impose on you that you are to judge whether you love your neighbour with true charity.

Oh! with what charity did the Redeemer bear with the rudeness and imperfections of His disciples during the whole time He lived with them! With what charity did He wash the feet of the traitor Judas! With what patience has He borne even to the present moment with your sinfulness and ingratitude! And will you refuse to bear with the defects of your neighbours? The physician while he loves a patient loathes his disease; and if you have charity you must love your neighbours and at the same time hate their faults. But you will say: What am I to do? I have a natural repugnance to the society of such a person, and feel it painful to hold intercourse with him. My answer is: Have more fervour and more charity, and all such antipathies will vanish.

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

VIII.—THE GREATNESS OF THE LOVE THIS MOTHER BEARS US.

Our Mother Mary loves us much, because we were recommended to her by her beloved Jesus when He, before expiring, said to her: *Woman, behold thy son!* for we were all represented in the person of St. John, as we have already observed: these were His last words; and the last recommendations left before death by persons we love are always treasured and never forgotten.

But again, we are exceedingly dear to Mary on account of the sufferings we cost her. Mothers generally love those children most the preservation of whose lives has

cost them the most suffering and anxiety; we are those children for whom Mary, in order to obtain for us the life of grace, was obliged to endure the bitter agony of herself offering her beloved Jesus to die an ignominious death, and had also to see Him expire before her own eyes in the midst of the most cruel and unheard-of torments. It was, then, by this great offering of Mary that we were born to the life of grace; we are therefore her very dear children, since we cost her so great suffering. And thus, as it is written of the love of the Eternal Father towards men, in giving His own Son to death for us, that *God so loved the world as to* give his only-begotten Son—(John iii. 16). "So also," says St. Bonaventure, "we can say of Mary that she has so loved us as to give her only-begotten Son for us." And when did she give Him? She gave Him, says Father Nieremberg, when she granted Him permission to deliver Himself up to death; she gave Him to us when, others neglecting to do so, either out of hatred or from fear, she might herself have pleaded for the life of her Son before the judges. Well may it be supposed that the words of so wise and loving a Mother would have had great weight, at least with Pilate, and might have prevented him from sentencing a man to death whom he knew and had declared to be innocent. But no, Mary would not say a word in favour of her Son, lest she might prevent that death on which our salvation depended. Finally, she gave Him to us a thousand and a thousand times during the three hours preceding His Death and which she spent at the foot of the Cross; for during the whole of that time she unceasingly offered with the extreme of sorrow and the extreme of love, the life of her Son on our behalf, and this with such constancy that St. Anselm and St. Antoninus say that if executioners had been wanting she herself would have crucified Him in order to obey the Eternal Father Who willed His Death for our salvation. If Abraham had such fortitude as to be ready to sacrifice with his own hands the life of his son, with far greater fortitude would Mary, far more holy and obedient than Abraham, have sacrificed the life of hers. But let us return to the consideration of

the gratitude we owe to Mary for so great an act of love as was the painful sacrifice of the life of her Son, which she made to obtain eternal salvation for us all. God abundantly rewarded Abraham for the sacrifice he was prepared to make of his son Isaac; but we, what return can we make to Mary for the life of her Jesus, a Son far more noble and beloved than the son of Abraham? "This love of Mary," says St. Bonaventure, "has indeed obliged us to love her; for we see that she has surpassed all others in love towards us, since she has given to us her only Son, Whom she loved more than herself."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XIV.—ON THE GREAT CONFIDENCE WE OUGHT TO HAVE IN THE LOVE JESUS CHRIST HAS SHOWN US AND IN ALL HE HAS DONE FOR US.

I.

Now, if we fear, on account of our frailty to fall under the assaults of our enemies, against whom we must continually wage war, behold what we have to do, as the Apostle admonishes us: *Let us run to the fight proposed unto us: looking on Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who having joy proposed unto him, underwent the cross, despising the shame*—(Heb. xii. 1, 2). Let us go out to the battle with great courage, looking at Jesus crucified, Who from His Cross offers us His assistance, the victory, and crown. In past times we fell into sin because we did not consider the wounds and the pains endured by our Redeemer, and so we did not have recourse to Him for help. But if for the future we set before our eyes all He has suffered for love of us, and how He ever stands ready to assist us when we have recourse to Him, it is certain that we shall not be conquered by our enemies. St. Teresa said, with her wonted generosity: "I do not understand the fears of certain persons who say: *The*

devil, the devil! so long as we can say: *God, God!*—and make Satan tremble." On the other hand, the Saint assures us that if we do not place all our confidence in God, all our own exertions will be of little or no avail. "All our exertions"—these are her own words—"are of little use if we do not give up entirely all trust in ourselves, and place it altogether in God."

Oh, what two great Mysteries of hope and love for us are the Passion of Jesus Christ and the Sacrament of the Altar!—Mysteries which we could have never believed, had not Faith assured us of them. That God Almighty should deign to become Man, shed all His Blood, and die of sorrow upon a Cross—and why? To pay for our sins and gain salvation for us rebellious worms! And then His own very Body, once sacrificed upon the Cross for us, this He vouchsafes to give us for our Food, in order to become wholly united with us! O God, how should not these two Mysteries consume with love the hearts of all men! And what sinner is there, be he ever so abandoned, who can despair of pardon, if he repent of the evil he has done, when he sees a God so full of love for men and so inclined to do them good? Hence St. Bonaventure, full of confidence, said: "I will have great confidence, firmly hoping that He Who has done and suffered so much for my salvation will deny me nothing that I have need of." How can He refuse to give me the graces necessary for my salvation, Who has done and suffered so much to save me?

II.

Let us go therefore, the Apostle exhorts us, *with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid*—(Heb. iv. 16). The Cross is *the throne of grace* on which Jesus sits to dispense graces and mercy to all who come to Him. But we must have recourse to Him at once if we would find seasonable aid for our salvation: for there will come a time, perhaps, when we shall no longer be able to find it. Let us go quickly, then, and embrace the Cross of Jesus Christ, and let us go with great confidence. Let us not be frightened by the sight of our miseries; in Jesus cruci-

fied we shall find all riches, all grace : *In all things you are made rich in him . . . so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace*—(1 Cor. i. 5, 7). The merits of Jesus Christ have enriched us with all the Divine treasures, and have made us capable of every grace we can desire.

St. Leo says that "Jesus has brought us by His death more good than the devil has done us harm by sin." And by these words he explains what St. Paul said before him, that the gift of Redemption is greater than sin, and that grace has overcome the offence. *Not as the offence, so also is the gift: where sin abounded, grace hath abounded more*—(Rom. v. 15, 20). From this the Saviour encourages us to hope for every favour and every grace through His merits. And see how He teaches us the way to obtain all we want from His Eternal Father : *Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it you* —(John xvi. 23). Whatever you desire, He says, ask for it of the Father in My Name, and I promise that you shall be heard. And, indeed, what shall the Father be able to deny us when He has given us His only-begotten Son, whom He loves as Himself? *He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also, with him, given us all things?*—(Rom. viii. 32). The Apostle says, *all things*; so that no grace is excepted, neither pardon, nor perseverance, nor holy love, nor perfection, nor Paradise—"all, all, He has given us." But we must pray to Him. God is all liberality to those who call upon Him : *Rich unto all that call upon him*—(Rom. x. 12).

Wednesday—Second Week after Easter

(Solemnity of St. Joseph).

Morning Meditation.

THE PATRONAGE OF ST. JOSEPH.

To understand how powerful is the intercession of St. Joseph with Jesus Christ, we need only know what the Gospel says, *and he was subject to them*—(Luke ii. 51). For thirty years, then, the Son of God most carefully obeyed Joseph and Mary. Joseph had only to indicate his will by a word or a sign, and he was immediately obeyed by Jesus. This humility of Jesus in obeying teaches us that the dignity of St. Joseph was above that of all the Saints, with the exception of the Divine Mother.

I.

Let us consider what St. Teresa says of the confidence we should have in the protection of St. Joseph; she says: "Our Lord seems to have granted power to other Saints to help in one necessity; experience proves that this Saint helps us in all; and our Lord wishes us to understand that, as on earth He was subject to Joseph, so also in Heaven He refuses him nothing that he asks. Other persons whom I advised to recommend themselves to St. Joseph have experienced this. I never knew any one who served him, by practising some particular devotion in his honour, who did not always make progress in virtue. I entreat those who do not believe what I say to try it themselves. I cannot understand how it is possible to think of the Queen of Angels, and of all the labours she underwent during the childhood of Jesus,

without returning thanks to St. Joseph for all the services he rendered at that time to the Mother and the Son." We can, therefore, imagine that we hear our Lord, when He sees us afflicted in the midst of our miseries, address us all in the words in which Pharaoh addressed his people at the time of the famine in Egypt: *Go to Joseph*—(Gen. xli. 55) if you desire consolation.

My holy patron, St. Joseph, I choose thee, after Mary, for my principal advocate and protector. I promise to honour thee every day by some special devotion, and by placing myself under thy protection. I am unworthy of being thy servant; but through the love which thou dost bear to Jesus and Mary, accept me for thy perpetual servant. Through the sweet company of Jesus and Mary which thou didst enjoy during life, protect me during my whole life, that I may never be separated from God by losing His grace.

II.

We should especially be devout to St. Joseph in order that the Saint may obtain us a good death. He, on account of having saved the Infant Jesus from the snares of Herod, has the special privileges of delivering dying persons from the snares of the devil. Moreover, on account of the services he rendered for so many years to Jesus and Mary, having by his labours provided them a dwelling and food, he has the privilege of obtaining the special assistance of Jesus and Mary for his devout clients at death.

My holy protector, St. Joseph, on account of my sins I deserve a bad death; but if thou defendest me I shall not be lost. Thou wast not only a great friend of my Judge, but thou wast also His guardian and adopted father; recommend me to thy Jesus, Who loves thee so much. I place myself under thy protection; accept me for thy perpetual servant. And by that holy company of Jesus and Mary which thou didst enjoy on earth, obtain that I may never more be separated from their love; and, in fine, by the assistance of Jesus and Mary, which thou hadst at death, obtain for me, that at my death I also may have the special assistance of Jesus and

Mary. Most holy Virgin, by the love which thou didst bear to thy holy spouse St. Joseph, help me at the hour of my death.

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

IX.—THE GREATNESS OF THE LOVE THIS MOTHER BEARS US.

Another motive for the love of Mary towards us arises from the fact that in us she sees souls that have been purchased at the price of the death of Jesus Christ. If a mother knew that a servant had been ransomed by a beloved son at the price of twenty years of imprisonment and suffering, how greatly would she esteem that servant on this account alone! Mary well knows that her Son came into the world only to save us poor creatures, as He Himself protested: *I am come to save that which was lost*—(Luke xix. 10). And to save us He was pleased even to lay down His life for us: *becoming obedient unto death*—(Phil. ii. 8). If, then, Mary loved us but little, she would show that she valued but little the Blood of her own Son, which was the price of our salvation. To St. Elizabeth of Hungary it was revealed that Mary, from the time she dwelt in the Temple, did nothing but pray for us, begging that God would hasten the coming of His Son into the world to save us. And how much more must we suppose that she loves us, now that she has seen that we are valued to such a degree by her Son, that He did not disdain to purchase us at such a cost!

Because all men have been redeemed by Jesus, therefore Mary loves and protects them all. It was she who was seen by St. John in the Apocalypse, clothed with the sun: *And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun*—(Apoc. xii. 1). She is said to be clothed with the sun because, as there is no one on earth who can be hidden from the heat of the sun, so there is no one living who can be deprived of the love of Mary.

There is no one that can hide himself from its heat—(Ps. xviii. 7), that is, as Blessed Raymond Jordano applies the words, "from the love of Mary." "And who," exclaims St. Antoninus, "can ever form an idea of the tender care that this most loving Mother takes of all of us," "offering and dispensing her mercy to every one"; for our good Mother desired the salvation of all, and co-operated in obtaining it. "It is evident," says St. Bernard, "that she was solicitous for the whole human race." Hence the custom of some of Mary's clients, which consists in asking our Lord to grant them the graces that our Blessed Lady seeks for them, succeeds most advantageously. They say: Lord, grant me that which the most Blessed Virgin Mary asks for me. "And no wonder," says Cornelius à Lapide, "for our Mother desires for us better things than we can possibly desire ourselves." The devout Bernardine de Bustis says that Mary "loves to do us good and dispense graces to us far more than we to receive them." On this subject Blessed Albert the Great applies to Mary the words of the Book of Wisdom: *She preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them*—(Wisd. vi. 14). Mary anticipates those who have recourse to her by making them find her before they seek her. "The love that this good Mother bears us is so great," says Richard of St. Laurence, "that as soon as she perceives our want she comes to our assistance. She comes before she is called."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XV.—ON THE GREAT CONFIDENCE WE OUGHT TO HAVE IN THE LOVE JESUS CHRIST HAS SHOWN US AND IN ALL HE HAS DONE FOR US.

I.

The Blessed John of Avila has left us many beautiful thoughts on the great confidence we should have in the merits of Jesus Christ.

"Do not forget," he says "that Jesus Christ is the Mediator between the Eternal Father and ourselves; and that we are beloved by Him, and united to Him by such strong bonds of love that nothing can break them, so long as a man does not himself dissolve them by some mortal sin. The Blood of Jesus cries out and asks mercy for us; and cries out so loudly that the noise of our sins is not heard. The death of Jesus Christ hath put to death our sins: *O death, I will be thy death!*—(Osee xiii. 14). Those who are lost are not lost for want of means of satisfaction, but, because they do not avail themselves of the Sacraments as the means of profiting by the satisfaction made by Jesus Christ."

"Jesus has taken upon Himself the affair of remedying our evils, as if it had been personally His own affair. So that He has called our sins His own, although He did not commit them, and has sought pardon for them; and with the most tender love has prayed, as if He were praying for Himself, that all who should have recourse to Him might become objects of love. And as He sought, so He found, because God has so ordained that Jesus and ourselves should be so united in one, that either He and we should be loved or He and we hated: and since Jesus is not and cannot be hated, in the same way, if we remain united by love to Jesus, we also shall be loved. By His being loved by God, we are also loved, seeing that Jesus Christ can do more to make us loved that we can do to make ourselves hated; since the Eternal Father loves Jesus Christ far more than He hates sinners."

My God, I love Thee; and because I love Thee I repent above all things for having offended Thee. In order not to lose a passing satisfaction, I have been willing, wretch that I am, to lose Thee so often, O Infinite Good! This thought torments me more than any pain: but it is a consolation to me to think that I have to do with infinite goodness, that knows not how to despise a heart that truly loves. Oh, that I could die for Thee, Who didst die for me! My dear Redeemer, I confidently hope for eternal salvation in the life to come, and in this life I hope for holy perseverance in Thy love; and therefore I propose always to ask it of Thee. And do Thou, by the

merits of Thy Death, give me perseverance in praying to Thee. This, too, I ask and hope of you, O Mary my Queen!

II.

"Jesus said to His Father: *Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me*—(John xvii. 24). Love has conquered hatred; and thus we have been pardoned and loved, and are secure of never being abandoned, so strong is the tie of love that binds us. The Lord said by Isaias: *Can a woman forget her infant? And if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee in my hands*—(Is. xlix. 15, 16). He has graven us in His hands with His own Blood. Thus we should not trouble ourselves about anything since everything is ordained by those hands which were nailed to the Cross in testimony of the love He bears us."

"Nothing can trouble us on which Jesus Christ cannot reassure us. Let the sins I have committed surround me, let devils lay snares for me, let fears for the future accuse me; by demanding mercy of the most tender Jesus Christ, Who has loved me even until death, I cannot possibly lose confidence; for I see myself so highly valued that God gave Himself for me. O my Jesus, sure haven for those who seek Thee in time of peril! O most watchful Pastor, he deceives himself who does not trust in Thee, if only he has the will to amend his life! Therefore Thou hast said: "I am here, fear not; I am He Who afflicts and Who consoles. Some from time to time I place in desolations which seem equal to hell itself; but after a while I bring them out and console them. I am thine Advocate, Who have made thy cause My own. I am thy Surety, Who am come to pay thy debts. I am thy Lord, Who redeemed thee with My Blood, not in order to abandon thee but to enrich thee, having bought thee at a great price. How shall I fly from him who seeks Me, when I went forth to meet those who sought to outrage Me? I did not turn away My face from him who struck Me; and shall I from him who would adore Me?

How can My children doubt that I love them, seeing that out of love for them I placed Myself in the hands of My enemies? Whom have I ever despised that loved Me? Whom have I ever abandoned that sought My aid? Even I go seeking those that do not seek Me."

"If you believe that the Eternal Father has given you His Son, believe also that He will give you everything else which is infinitely less than His Son. Do not think that Jesus Christ is forgetful of you, since He has left you, as the greatest memorial and pledge of His love, Himself in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar."

O my Jesus, my Love, what joyful hope does Thy Passion give me! How can I possibly fear I may not receive from an Almighty God Who has given me all His Blood, the pardon of my sins, Paradise, and all other graces that I require! Ah, my Jesus, my Hope and my Love, Thou, in order that I might not perish, didst give Thy life; I love Thee above every good, my Redeemer and my God. Thou gavest Thyself entirely to me; I give Thee my whole will, and with it I repeat that I love Thee, and I will always say I love Thee, I love Thee! So I always desire to say in this life, so I wish to die, breathing forth my last sigh with this dear word on my lips: *My God, I love Thee!* that from that moment I may commence a love towards Thee which shall last without cessation for all eternity.

Thursday—Second Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

CHARITY TO BE PRACTISED IN WORDS.

Father Alvarez used to say that virtue is weak till it is proved by ill-treatment from others. It is by the manner in which she bears with contempt and insult that

a soul shows whether she abounds or fails in charity. O my God! What a sad thing to see certain souls, who practise mental prayer and frequent the Sacraments, so sensitive to every mark of disrespect or inattention!

I.

Let us consider how meekness is to be practised.

In the first place, endeavour with all your might to restrain every motion of anger. In the next place, you must be careful to abstain from all disagreeable words, and to avoid all roughness and haughtiness of manner; for rude conduct is sometimes more offensive than insulting language. Should a person ever treat you with contempt, suffer it in patience for the love of Jesus Christ, who for the love of you has borne with far greater insults. My God! what a misery to see certain souls, who practise mental prayer and frequent the Sacraments, so sensitive to every mark of disrespect or inattention! Sister Mary of the Ascension, as often as she received an affront, went immediately before the Blessed Sacrament, and said: My Spouse, I bring you this little present; I beg you to accept it, and to pardon the person by whom I have been offended. Why do you not imitate this holy Religious? To preserve charity you must suffer all things. Father Alvarez used to say that virtue is weak till it is proved by ill-treatment from others. It is by the manner in which she bears with contempt and insult that a soul shows whether she abounds or fails in charity.

Should any one ever address you in the language of passion, or even of insult and reproach, answer with sweetness, and his anger will be instantly appeased. *A mild answer breaketh wrath*—(Prov. xv. 1). St. John Chrysostom says: "Fire cannot be extinguished by fire, nor wrath by anger." Do you imagine that by replying with acrimony to those who speak to you in anger you will calm passion? On the contrary, you will provoke it, and will also violate charity. Let your answer to every word of anger be full of sweetness, and the fire of passion will be instantly extinguished. Sophronius relates that two monks having missed their way on a

journey, entered by chance into a field in which seed had been just sown. The man who was intrusted with the care of the field burst into a fit of rage and heaped upon them every epithet of reproach. At first they were silent, but seeing that their silence served only to inflame his anger they exclaimed: "Brother, we have done wrong; for God's sake pardon us." This humble answer calmed his passion and filled his soul with sorrow for his conduct. He immediately asked pardon of the monks for his injurious language—he even left the world afterwards and joined them in the cloister.

II.

You will sometimes think it right and even necessary to repress by a sharp answer the forwardness of another, particularly if you are a Superior, and he be wanting in respect for you; but be assured that such sharpness proceeds from passion rather than from reason. I know that anger is sometimes lawful. *Be angry*, says the Psalmist, *and sin not*—(Ps. iv. 5). But to be angry and not to sin is very difficult in practice. Whoever abandons himself to anger exposes his soul to imminent danger. Hence St. Francis de Sales wisely teaches in his *Philothea*, that however just the occasions of anger may be, its motions should be repressed. "It is better," says the Saint, "to have it said of you that you are never angry, than that you were justly angry." St. Augustine says that anger once allowed to enter the soul is banished with difficulty; and therefore he strongly recommends us to stifle it in its very origin. A certain philosopher called Agrippinus, having lost his property, said: "If I have lost my goods I will not lose my peace." Let such be your language as often as you receive any offence. Is it not enough for you to have received an affront? Do you wish, moreover, to lose the peace of your soul by yielding to anger? The disturbance of mind occasioned by anger will be far more injurious to you than the insult that you have received. St. Augustine says that he who yields to passion on every occasion of insult is his own chastiser. Disquiet of soul, even when it arises from a regret for a fault, is

always injurious. For, as St. Aloysius used to say, it delights the devil to fish in troubled waters.

I have said that when someone speaks to you in the language or tone of passion or contempt you should answer with sweetness. But I now say that whenever the soul is disturbed it is better to be silent; for passion will then make harsh expressions appear just and reasonable. But when peace returns you will see that your language was altogether unjustifiable. St. Bernard says that anger draws over the soul a dark veil which renders her incapable of distinguishing what is right from what is wrong.

When the person who has offended you comes to ask pardon, be careful not to receive him with a stern countenance, nor to show discontent or want of respect by your words or looks.

But whenever you offend or displease another, endeavour at once, by all means in your power, to make satisfaction to the person, and to remove from his heart all feelings of aversion towards you. St. Bernard says that "humility alone is the reparation of wounded charity." Self-humiliation is the most efficacious means of repairing the violation of charity. Whenever, then, you offend against charity, humble yourself immediately, overcome by force your natural repugnance to humiliation : the longer you defer the reparation of the fault you have committed, the more your repugnance to make reparation will increase. *If*, says the Redeemer, *thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; leave there thy offering before the altar and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming, thou shalt offer thy gift* — (Matt. v. 23, 24). If you come to the altar to offer your gift, to receive the Holy Eucharist, or to attend Mass, and remember that you have offended a brother, retire from the altar and be reconciled to him.

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

X.—THE GREATNESS OF THE LOVE THIS MOTHER BEARS US.

If Mary is so good to all, even to the ungrateful and negligent, who love her but little and seldom have recourse to her, how much more loving will she be to those who love her and often call upon her! *She is found by them that seek her*—(Wisd. vi. 13). "Oh, how easy," says Blessed Albert the Great, "it is for those who love Mary to find her, and to find her full of compassion and love!" In the words of the Book of Proverbs, *I love them that love me*—(Prov. viii. 17), she protests that she cannot do otherwise than love those who love her. And although this most loving Lady loves all men as her children, yet, says St. Bernard, "she recognises and loves"—that is, she loves in a more special manner those who love her more tenderly. Blessed Raymond Jordano asserts that these happy lovers of Mary are not only loved but even served by her; for he says that those who find the most Blessed Virgin Mary find all; for she loves those who love her, nay more, she serves those who serve her.

In the *Chronicles* of the Order of St. Dominic it is related that one of the friars named Leonard used to recommend himself two hundred times a day to this Mother of Mercy, and that when he was attacked by his last illness he saw a most beautiful queen by his side who thus addressed him: "Leonard, wilt thou die, and come and dwell with my Son and with me?" "And who art thou?" he replied. "I am," said the Most Blessed Virgin, for she it was, "I am the Mother of Mercy: thou hast so many times invoked me, behold, I am now come to take thee; let us go together to Paradise." On the same day Leonard died, and, as we trust, followed her to the kingdom of the blessed.

"Ah, most sweet Mary!" exclaimed St. John Berchmans, of the Society of Jesus, "blessed is he who loves thee! If I love Mary I am certain of perseverance, and will obtain whatever I wish from God." Therefore the devout youth was never tired of renewing his resolution, and of repeating often to himself: "I will love Mary; I will love Mary."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XVI.—HOW MUCH WE ARE OBLIGED TO LOVE JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Jesus Christ as God has a claim on all our love; but by the love which He has shown us He wished to put us, so to speak, under the necessity of loving Him, at least in gratitude for all He has done and suffered for us. He has greatly loved us that we might love Him greatly. "Why does God love us but that He may be loved?" wrote St. Bernard. And Moses had said the same: *And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord thy God . . . and love him*—(Deut. x. 12). Therefore the first command which He gave us was this: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart*—(Deut. vi. 5).

And St. Paul says that love is the fulfilling of the law: *Love is the fulfilling of the law*—(Rom. xv. 10). For "fulfilling" the Greek text has the "embracing of the law"—love embraces the entire law. And who, indeed, at the sight of a crucified God dying for our love can refuse to love Him?

Those Thorns, those Nails, that Cross, those Wounds, and that Blood call upon us, and irresistibly urge us to love Him Who has loved us so much. One heart is too little wherewith to love this God so enamoured of us.

In order to requite the love of Jesus Christ, it would

require another God to die for His love. "Ah, why," exclaims St. Francis de Sales, "do we not throw ourselves on Jesus Christ to die on the Cross with Him Who was pleased to die there for the love of us?" The Apostle clearly impresses on us that Jesus Christ died for us for this end, that we might no longer live for ourselves but solely for that God Who died for us: *Christ died for all, that they also who live may not now live to themselves, but unto him who died for them*—(2 Cor. v. 15).

II.

And the recommendation of Ecclesiasticus is here to the point: *Forget not the kindness of thy surety; for he hath given his life for thee*—(Ecclus. xxix. 19). Be not unmindful of Him Who has stood surety for thee; Who, to satisfy for thy sins, was willing to pay off, by His death, the debt of punishment due from thee. Oh, how desirous is Jesus Christ that we should continually remember His Passion! And how it saddens Him to see that we are so unmindful of it! Should a person endure for one of his friends affronts, blows, and imprisonment, how afflicting would it be for him to know that that friend afterwards never gave it a thought, and cared not even to hear it spoken of! On the contrary how gratified would he be to know that his friend constantly spoke of it with the warmest gratitude, and often thanked him for it. So it is pleasing to Jesus Christ when we preserve in our minds a grateful and loving recollection of the sorrows and death He underwent for us. Jesus Christ was the desired of the ancient Fathers; He was the desired of all nations before He was yet come upon earth. Now, how much more ought He to be our only desire and our only love, now that we know that He is really come, and are aware how much He has done and suffered for us—so that He even died upon the Cross for love of us!

Friday—Second Week after Easter

(First Friday of May).

Morning Meditation.

THE GENEROUS HEART OF JESUS.

In the Heart of Jesus we receive every good, every grace we desire. To the heart of Jesus we are debtors for all the graces we have ever received—the graces of Redemption, the graces of Vocation, of light, of pardon; the grace to resist temptation and to bear contradictions patiently. The Sacred Heart is rich unto all who call upon it.

I.

It is characteristic of good-hearted people to desire to make everybody happy, and especially those most distressed and afflicted. But who can ever find one who has a kinder heart than Jesus Christ? He is infinite Goodness, and has therefore a sovereign desire to communicate to us His riches: *With me are riches . . . that I may enrich them that love me*—(Prov. viii. 18, 21). He for this purpose made Himself poor, as the Apostle says, that He might make us rich: *He became poor for your sakes, that through his poverty you might be rich*—(2 Cor. viii. 9). For this purpose also He chose to remain with us in the most Holy Sacrament, where He remains constantly with His hands full of graces, as was seen by Father Balthazar Alvarez, to dispense them to those who come to visit Him. For this reason also He bestows Himself on us in Holy Communion, giving us to understand thereby that He cannot refuse us any good gifts, since He even gives Himself entirely to us: *How hath he not also, with him, given us all things*—(Rom. viii. 32). For in the Heart of Jesus we receive every good, every

grace we desire : *In all things you are made rich in Christ . . . so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace*—(1 Cor. i. 5, 7).

Ah, my Jesus, Thou hast not refused to give me Thy Blood and Thy Life, and shall I refuse to give Thee my miserable heart? No, my dearest Redeemer, I offer it entirely to Thee. I give Thee all my will; do Thou accept it, and dispose of it at Thy pleasure. I can do nothing, and have nothing; but I have this heart which Thou hast given me, and of which no one can deprive me. I may be deprived of my goods, my blood, my life, but not of my heart. With this heart I can love Thee; with this heart I will love Thee.

I beseech Thee, O my God, teach me a perfect forgetfulness of myself; teach me what I must do to arrive at Thy pure love, of which Thou in Thy goodness hast inspired me with the desire. I feel in myself a determination to please Thee; but in order to put my resolve into execution, I expect and implore help from Thee. It depends on Thee, O loving Heart of Jesus, to make entirely Thine my poor heart, which hitherto has been so ungrateful, and through my own fault deprived of Thy love. Oh, grant that my heart may be all on fire with the love of Thee, even as Thine is on fire with the love of me. Grant that my will may be entirely united to Thine, so that I may will nothing but what Thou willest, and that from this day forth Thy holy will may be the rule of all my actions, of all my thoughts, and of all my desires. I trust, O my Saviour, that Thou wilt not refuse me Thy grace to fulfil this resolution which I now make prostrate at Thy feet, to receive with submission whatever Thou mayest ordain for me and my affairs, as well in life as in death. Blessed art thou, O Immaculate Mary, who hadst thy heart always and entirely united to the Heart of Jesus; obtain for me, O my Mother, that in future I may wish and desire that which Jesus wills and thou willest.

II.

We must understand that we are debtors to the Heart of Jesus for all the graces we have received—graces of

Redemption, of Vocation, of light, of pardon, the grace to resist temptations, and to bear patiently with contradictions; for without His assistance we could not do anything good: *Without me you can do nothing*—(John xv. 5). And if hitherto, says our Saviour, you have not received more graces, do not complain of Me, but blame yourself, who have neglected to seek them of Me: *Hitherto you have not asked any thing . . . ask, and you shall receive*—(John xvi. 24). Oh, how rich and liberal is the Heart of Jesus towards every one that has recourse to Him! *Rich unto all that call upon him*—(Rom. x. 12). Oh what great mercies do those souls receive who are earnest in asking help of Jesus Christ. David said, *For thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild, and plenteous in mercy to all who call upon thee*—(Ps. lxxxv. 5). Let us therefore always go to this Heart and ask with confidence, and we shall obtain all we want.

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

XI.—THE GREATNESS OF THE LOVE THIS MOTHER BEARS US.

Oh, how much does the love of this good Mother exceed that of all her children! Let them love her as much as they will, Mary is always amongst lovers the most loving, says St. Ignatius the Martyr.

Let them love her as did St. Stanislaus Kostka, who loved this dear Mother so tenderly that in speaking of her he moved all who heard him to love her. He had made new words and new titles with which to honour her name. He never did anything without first turning to her image and asking her blessing. When he said her Office, the Rosary, or other prayers, he did so with the same external marks of affection as he would have done had he been speaking face to face with Mary; when the *Salve Regina* was sung, his whole soul, and even his

whole countenance, was all inflamed with love. On being one day asked by a Father of the Society who was going with him to visit a picture of the Blessed Virgin, how much he loved Mary, "Father," he answered, "what more can I say?—she is my Mother." "But," adds the Father, "the holy youth uttered these words with such tenderness in his voice, with such an expression of countenance, and at the same time it came so fully from his heart, that it no longer seemed to be a young man but rather an angel speaking of the love of Mary."

Let us love her as Blessed Hermann loved her. He called her the spouse of his love, for he was honoured by Mary herself with this same title. Let us love her as did St. Philip Neri, who was filled with consolation at the mere thought of Mary, and therefore called her his delight. Let us love her as did St. Bonaventure, who called her not only his Lady and Mother, but to show the tenderness of his affection, even called her his heart and soul: "Hail, my Lady, my Mother; nay, even my heart, my soul!"

Let us love her like that great lover of Mary, St. Bernard, who loved this sweet Mother so much that he called her "the ravisher of hearts"; and to express the ardent love he bore her, added: "for hast thou not ravished my heart, O Queen?"

Let us call her our beloved, like St. Bernardine of Sienna, who daily went to visit a devotional picture of Mary, and there, in tender colloquies with his Queen, declared his love; and when asked where he went each day, he replied that he went to visit his beloved.

Let us love her as did St. Aloysius Gonzaga, whose love for Mary burnt so unceasingly that whenever he heard the sweet name of his Mother mentioned his heart was instantly inflamed and his countenance lighted up with a fire that was visible to all.

Let us love as much as St. Francis Solano did, who, maddened as it were, but with a holy madness, with love for Mary, would sing before her picture, and accompany himself on a musical instrument, saying that, like worldly lovers, he serenaded his most sweet Queen.

Finally, let us love her as so many of her servants have

loved her who never could do enough to show their love. Father John of Trexo, of the Society of Jesus, rejoiced in the name of "slave of Mary," and as a mark of servitude went often to visit her in some church dedicated in her honour. On reaching the church he poured out abundant tears of tenderness and love for Mary; then, prostrating, he licked and rubbed the pavement with his tongue and face, kissing it a thousand times, because it was the house of his beloved Lady. Father James Martinez, of the same Society, who, for his devotion to our Blessed Lady on her feasts, was carried by Angels to Heaven to see how they were kept there, used to say: "Would that I had the hearts of all Angels and Saints to love Mary as they love her. Would that I had the lives of all men, to give them all for her love!"

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XVII.—HOW MUCH WE ARE OBLIGED TO LOVE JESUS CHRIST.

I.

For this purpose He instituted the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist on the day preceding His death, and gave us the injunction that as often as we should be nourished with His most sacred flesh we should be mindful of His death: *Take ye, and eat; this is my body . . . This do for a commemoration of me . . . For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice you shall show the death of the Lord until he come*—(1 Cor. xi. 24, 26). Wherefore the holy Church prays: "O God, Who under this wonderful Sacrament has left us a memorial of Thy Passion," etc. And she also sings: "O sacred Banquet, in which Christ is taken, the memory of His Passion is renewed," etc. Hence we may gather how pleasing to Jesus Christ are they who think frequently of His Passion, since it was for this very purpose that He left Himself in

the Holy Sacrament upon our Altars, in order that we may bear in continual and grateful remembrance all that He suffered for us, and by this means evermore increase our love towards Him. St. Francis de Sales called Mount Calvary "the mountain of lovers." It is impossible to remember that mount and not love Jesus Christ Who died there for love of us.

II.

Oh, God, and how is it that men do not love this God Who has done so much to be loved by men! Before the Incarnation of the Word, man might have doubted whether God loved him with a true love; but after the coming of the Son of God, and after His dying for the love of men, how can we possibly doubt of His love? "O man," says St. Thomas of Villanova, "look on that Cross, on those torments, and that cruel death which Jesus Christ has suffered for thee: after so great and so many tokens of His love, thou canst no longer entertain a doubt that He loves thee, and loves thee exceedingly." And St. Bernard says that "the Cross and every Wound of our Blessed Redeemer cry aloud to make us understand the love He bears us."

In this grand Mystery of man's Redemption, we must consider how Jesus employed all His thoughts and zeal to discover every means of making Himself loved by us. Had He merely wished to die for our salvation it would have been sufficient had He been slain by Herod with the other children; but no, He chose before dying to lead, during thirty-three years, a life of hardship and suffering; and during that time, with a view to win our love, He appeared in several different guises. First of all as a poor child born in a stable; then as a little boy helping in the workshop; and finally, as a criminal executed on a Cross. But before dying on the Cross we see Him in many different states, one and all calculated to excite our compassion, and to make Himself loved: in agony in the garden, bathed from head to foot in a sweat of blood; afterwards in the court of Pilate, torn with scourges; then treated as a mock king, with a reed in His hand, a ragged garment of purple on His shoulders and a crown of thorns

on His head; then dragged publicly through the streets to death, with the Cross upon His shoulders; and at length on the hill of Calvary, suspended on the Cross by three iron nails. Tell me, does He merit our love or not, this God Who has vouchsafed to endure all these torments, and to use so many means in order to captivate our love? Father John Rigouleux used to say: "I would spend my life weeping for love of a God Whose love induced Him to die for the salvation of men."

Saturday—Second Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

MARY'S CHASTITY.

"Of all the combats in which we are engaged," says St. Augustine, "the most severe are those of chastity: its battles are daily, but victory rare." May God be ever praised, however, Who in Mary has given a great example of this virtue! And, O how powerful is the name of Mary in conquering all temptations against holy purity!

I.

Ever since the fall of Adam, the senses being rebellious against reason, chastity is, of all virtues, the most difficult to practise. St. Augustine says: "Of all the combats in which we are engaged, the most severe are those of chastity; its battles are daily, but victory rare." May God be ever praised, however, Who in Mary has given us a great example of this virtue!

"With reason," says Blessed Albert the Great, "is Mary called the Virgin of virgins; for she, without the

counsel or example of others, was the first to offer her virginity to God." Thus did she bring all virgins who imitate her to God, as David had already foretold: *After her shall virgins be brought . . . into the temple of the King*—(Ps. xliv. 15) Without counsel and without example. Yes; for St. Bernard says: "O Virgin, who taught thee to please God by virginity, and to lead an Angel's life on earth?" "Ah," replies St. Sophronius, "God chose this most pure Virgin for His Mother, that she might be an example of chastity to all." Therefore does St. Ambrose call Mary "the standard-bearer of virginity."

By reason of her purity the Blessed Virgin was also declared by the Holy Ghost to be beautiful as the turtle-dove: *Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle dove's*—(Cant. i. 9). "Mary," says Aponius, "was a most pure turtle-dove." For the same reason she was also called a lily: *As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters*—(Cant. ii. 2). On this passage Denis the Carthusian remarks that "Mary was compared to a lily amongst thorns, because all other virgins were thorns, either to themselves or to others; but that the Blessed Virgin was so neither to herself nor to others"; for she inspired all who looked at her with chaste thoughts. This is confirmed by St. Thomas, who says that the beauty of the Blessed Virgin was an incentive to chastity in all who beheld her. St. Jerome declared that it was his opinion that St. Joseph remained a virgin by living with Mary; for, writing against the heretic Helvidius, who denied Mary's virginity, he says: "Thou sayest that Mary did not remain a virgin. I say that not only she remained a virgin, but even that Joseph preserved his virginity through Mary."

Blessed John of Avila says that "many who were tempted against purity preserved themselves chaste by devotion to our Blessed Lady." Oh, how specially powerful is the name of Mary in conquering all temptations to impurity! O most pure Mary, deliver me from it. Grant that in all my temptations I may always have recourse to thee, and invoke thee as long as the temptation lasts.

II.

St. Gregory of Nyssa says that so much did the Blessed Virgin love this virtue that, to preserve it, she would have been willing to renounce even the dignity of Mother of God. This we may conclude from her answer to the Archangel: *How shall this be done, because I know not man?*—and from the words she afterwards added: *Be it done to me according to thy word*—(Luke i. 34, 38), signifying that she gave her consent on the condition that, as the Angel had assured her, she would become a Mother only by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost.

Saint Ambrose says that whoever has preserved chastity is an Angel, and that he who has lost it is a devil. Our Lord assures us that those who are chaste become Angels: *They shall be as the angels of God in heaven*—(Matt. xxii. 30). But the impure become as devils, hateful in the sight of God. St. Remigius used to say that the greater part of adults are lost by this vice. Seldom, as we have already said with St. Augustine, is a victory gained over this vice. But why? It is because the means by which it may be gained are seldom made use of, namely, fasting, avoidance of the occasions of sin, and prayer.

Ah, my Immaculate Queen, fair dove, and the beloved of God, disdain not to cast thine eyes on the many stains and wounds of my soul. Behold me, and pity me! God Who loves thee so much denies thee nothing; and thou knowest not how to refuse those who have recourse to thee. O Mary, to thee I have recourse. Pity me. Mother inviolate, pray for us!

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

XII.—THE GREATNESS OF THE LOVE THIS MOTHER BEARS US.

Oh, that all would come to love Mary as did Charles, the son of St. Bridget, who said that nothing in the world

consoled him so much as the knowledge that Mary was so greatly loved by God. And he added that he would willingly endure every torment rather than allow Mary to lose the smallest degree of her glory, were such a thing possible; and that if her glory were his, he would renounce it in her favour, as being far more worthy of it.

Let us, moreover, desire to lay down our lives as a testimony of our love for Mary, as St. Alonso Rodriguez desired to do. Let us love her as did those who even cut the beloved name of Mary on their breasts with sharp instruments, as did Francis Binanzio and Radagundis, wife of King Clothaire; or as did those who could imprint this loved name on their flesh with hot irons in order that it might remain more distinct and lasting, as did her devout servants Baptist Archinto and Augustine d'Espinosa, both of the Society of Jesus, impelled thereto by the vehemence of their love.

Let us, in fine, do or desire to do, all that it is possible for a lover to do who intends to make his affection known to the person loved. For be assured that the lovers of Mary will never be able to equal her in love. "I know, O Lady," says St. Peter Damian, "that thou art most loving, and that thou lovest us with an invincible love." I know, my Lady, that among lovers thou lovest the most, and that thou lovest us with a love that can never be surpassed.

St. Alonso Rodriguez, of the Society of Jesus, once prostrate before an image of Mary, felt his heart inflamed with love towards this most Holy Virgin, and burst forth into the following exclamation: "My most beloved Mother, I know that thou lovest me, but thou dost not love me as much as I love thee." Mary, as it were, offended on the point of love, immediately replied from the image: "What dost thou say, Alonso—what dost thou say? Oh, how much greater is the love that I bear thee than any love thou canst have for me! Know that the distance between Heaven and earth is not so great as the distance between thy love and mine."

St. Bonaventure, then, was right in exclaiming: Blessed are they who have the good fortune to be faithful servants and lovers of this most loving Mother. "Blessed

are the hearts of those who love Mary; blessed are they who are tenderly devoted to her." Yes; for "in this struggle our most gracious Queen never allows her clients to conquer her in love. She returns our love and homage, and always increases her past favours by new ones." Mary, imitating in this our most loving Redeemer Jesus Christ, returns to those who love her their love doubled in benefits and favours.

Then will I exclaim, with the enamoured St. Anselm, "May my heart languish and my soul melt and be consumed with your love, O my beloved Saviour Jesus, and my dear Mother Mary! But, as without your grace I cannot love you, grant me, O Jesus and Mary, grant my soul, by your merits and not mine, the grace to love you as you deserve to be loved. O God, Lover of men, Thou couldst love guilty men even unto death. And canst Thou deny Thy love and that of Thy Mother to those who ask it?"

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XVIII.—HOW MUCH WE ARE OBLIGED TO LOVE JESUS CHRIST.

I.

"Love is a great thing," says St. Bernard. A great thing, a precious thing is love. Solomon, speaking of the Divine wisdom, which is holy Charity, called it an infinite treasure; because he that possesses Charity is made partaker of the friendship of God: *For she is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God*—(Wisd. vii. 14). The angelic doctor, St. Thomas, says that Charity is not only the queen of all virtues, but that wherever she reigns she draws along with her, as it were in her train, all other virtues, and directs them all so as to bring us in closer union with God; but Charity is properly that which unites us with God. As St. Bernard tells us: "Charity is a virtue uniting us with God." And, indeed, it is over and over again signified in the Holy Scriptures that God loves whoever loves

Him : *I love them that love me*—(Prov. viii. 17). *If anyone loves me . . . my Father will love him; and we will come to him and make our abode with him*—(John xiv. 23). *He that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him*—(1 John iv. 16). Behold the beautiful union which Charity produces; it unites the soul with God. Moreover, love supplies strength to practise and to suffer everything for God : *Love is strong as death* —Cant. viii. 6). St. Augustine writes : " Nothing is so hard that cannot be subdued by the fire of love." Wherefore the Saint says that where we love, either the labour is not felt, or if felt, the labour itself is loved : " In that which is loved either there is no labour, or the labour is loved."

II.

Let us hear from St. John Chrysostom what are the effects of Divine love in those souls in which it reigns : " When the love of God has taken possession of a soul it produces an insatiable desire to work for the Beloved; insomuch that however many and however vast the works she does, and however prolonged the duration of her service, all seems nothing in her eyes, and she is afflicted at doing so little for God; and were it permitted her to die and consume herself for Him, she would be most happy. Hence it is that she esteems herself an unprofitable servant in all that she does; because she is instructed by love to know what God deserves, and sees by this clear light all the defects of her actions, and finds in them motives for confusion and pain, well aware how mean is all she can do for so great a Lord."

" Oh, how those persons delude themselves," says St. Francis de Sales, " who place virtue in anything else but loving God ! Some," writes the Saint, " put perfection in austerities, others in alms, others in prayer, others in frequenting the Holy Sacraments. For my part, I know of no other perfection than that of loving God with our whole heart; because all the other virtues, without love, are but a mere heap of stones. And if we do not perfectly enjoy this holy love, the fault lies with us because we do not, once for all, come to the conclusion of giving ourselves wholly to God."

Third Sunday after Easter

Morning Meditation.

"A LITTLE WHILE AND NOW YOU SHALL NOT SEE ME"—(Gospel of Sunday. John xvi.).

There is nothing shorter than time, and yet nothing more valuable. There is nothing shorter, for the past is no more, the future is uncertain, the present only a moment. Jesus Christ said: *A little time and now you shall not see me.* We may say the same of our life which, according to St. James *is a vapour which appeareth for a little while*—(iv. 15).

I.

The time is short, says the Apostle, St. Paul, *it remaineth that . . . they that weep be as though they wept not; that they that rejoice, as if they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that used this world, as if they used it not*—(1 Cor. vii. 29, 31). Since, then, the time we have to remain on this earth is short, the Apostle tells those who weep that they ought not to weep, because their sorrows shall soon pass away; and those who rejoice, not to fix their affections on enjoyments, because they shall soon have an end. Hence he concludes that we should use this world, not to enjoy its transitory goods, but to merit eternal life.

Son, says the Holy Ghost, *observe the time*—(Ecclus. iv. 23). Son, learn to preserve time, which is the most precious and the greatest gift that God can bestow upon you. St. Bernardine of Sienna teaches that time is of as much value as God; because in every moment of time well spent the possession of God is merited. He adds that in every instant of this life a man may obtain

pardon of his sins, the grace of God, and the glory of Paradise. Hence St. Bonaventure says that " no loss is of greater moment than the loss of time."

But, on his part, St. Bernard says that though there is nothing more precious than time, there is nothing less valuable in the estimation of men. You will see some persons spending four or five hours in play. If you ask them why they lose so much time, they answer : To amuse ourselves. Others remain half the day standing in a street, or looking out from a window. If you ask them what they are doing, they will say in reply that they are passing the time. And why, says the same Saint, do you lose this time ? Why should you lose even a single hour which the mercy of God gives you to weep for your sins, and to acquire Divine grace ?

O time, despised by men during life, how much will you be desired at the hour of death, and particularly in the other world ! Time is a blessing we enjoy only in this life ; it is not enjoyed in the next ; it is not found in Heaven nor in hell. In hell the damned exclaim with tears : " Oh that an hour were given to us !" They would pay any price for an hour or for a minute in which they might repair their eternal ruin. But this hour or minute they never shall have. In Heaven there is no weeping ; but, were the Saints capable of sorrow, all their wailing should arise from the thought of having lost in this life the time in which they could have acquired greater glory, and from the conviction that this time shall never more be given to them.

O God of my soul, what should be my lot at this moment hadst Thou not shown me so many mercies ! I should be in hell among the fools to whose number I have belonged. I thank Thee, O my Lord, and I entreat Thee not to abandon me in my blindness. I feel that Thou dost tenderly call me to ask pardon and to hope for graces from Thee. Yes, my Saviour, I hope Thou wilt admit me among Thy children. Father, I am not worthy to be called Thy child ! I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee !

II.

St. Francis Borgia was careful to employ every moment of his time for God. When others spoke of useless things, he conversed with God by holy affections; and so recollected was he that, when asked his opinion on the subject of conversation he knew not what answer to make. Being corrected for this, he said: I am content to be considered stupid rather than lose my time in vanities.

Some will say: What evil am I doing? Is it not, I ask, an evil to spend your time in amusements, in conversations, and useless occupations which are unprofitable to the soul? Does God give you this time to waste it? *Let not*, says the Holy Ghost, *the part of a good gift overpass thee*—(Ecclus. xiv. 14). The labourers of whom St. Matthew speaks did no evil; they only lost time, remaining idle in the streets. But they were rebuked: *Why stand you here all the day idle?*—(Matth. xx. 6). On the day of Judgment Jesus Christ will demand an account, not only of every month and day that has been lost, but even of every idle word spoken. *Every idle word that men shall speak they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment*—(Matth. xii. 36). He will likewise demand an account of every moment of the time which you will lose. According to St. Bernard, all time not spent for God is time lost. Hence the Holy Ghost says: *Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly: for neither work nor reason . . . shall be in hell, whither thou art hastening.* What you can do to-day defer not till to-morrow; for on to-morrow you may be dead, and may be gone into another world where you shall have no more time to do good, and where you shall only enjoy the reward of your virtues or suffer the punishment due to your sins. *To-day if you shall hear his voice harden not your hearts*—(Ps. xciv.). Obey His call to-day; for it may happen that on to-morrow time will be no more for you, or that God will call you no more. All our salvation depends on corresponding with the Divine calls, and at the time that God calls us.

O my God, enlighten me! Give me to understand that the only evil is to offend Thee, the only good to love

Thee. Enable me to spend the remainder of my days in serving Thee. O Mary, my hope, do thou intercede for me.

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

XIII.—MARY IS THE MOTHER OF PENITENT SINNERS.

Our Blessed Lady told St. Bridget that she was the Mother not only of the just and innocent, but also of sinners, provided they were willing to repent. Oh, how prompt does a sinner who is desirous of amendment and flies to her feet find this good Mother to embrace and help him, far more so than any earthly mother! St. Gregory VII wrote in this sense to princess Matilda, saying: "Resolve to sin no more and I promise that undoubtedly thou wilt find Mary more ready to love thee than any earthly mother."

But whoever aspires to be a child of this great Mother must first abandon sin, and then may hope to be accepted as such. Richard of St. Laurence, on the words of Proverbs, *up rose her children*—(Prov. xxxi. 28), remarks that the words *up rose* came first, and then the word *children* to show that no one can be a child of Mary without first endeavouring to rise from the fault into which he has fallen; for he who is in mortal sin is not worthy to be called the son of such a Mother. And St. Peter Chrysologus says that he who acts in a different manner from Mary declares thereby that he will not be her son. "He who does not the works of his Mother abjures his lineage." Mary humble and he proud; Mary pure and he wicked; Mary full of charity and he hating his neighbour. He gives thereby proof that he is not, and will not be, the son of his holy Mother. The sons of Mary, says Richard of St. Laurence, are her imitators, and this chiefly in three things—in chastity, liberality, and humility; and also in meekness, mercy, and such like.

Whilst disgusting her by a wicked life, who would dare even to wish to be the child of Mary? A certain sinner once said to Mary, "Show thyself a Mother"; but the Blessed Virgin replied, "Show thyself a son." Another invoked the Divine Mother, calling her the "Mother of mercy"; and she answered: "You sinners, when you want my help, call me 'Mother of mercy,' and at the same time do not cease by your sins to make me a 'Mother of sorrow and anguish.'" *He is cursed of God*, says Ecclesiasticus, *that angereth his mother*—(Ecclus. iii. 18). "*His mother*, that is, Mary," says Richard of St. Laurence. God curses those who by their wicked life, and still more by their obstinacy in sin, afflict this tender Mother.

I say by their obstinacy; for if a sinner, though he may not as yet have given up his sin, endeavours to do so, and for this purpose seeks the help of Mary, this good Mother will not fail to assist him, and make him recover the grace of God. And this is precisely what St. Bridget heard one day from the lips of Jesus Christ, Who, speaking to His Mother, said: "Thou assistest him who endeavours to return to God, and thy consolations are never wanting to anyone." So long, then, as a sinner is obstinate, Mary cannot love him; but if he, finding himself chained by some passion which keeps him a slave of hell, recommends himself to the Blessed Virgin, and implores her, with confidence and perseverance, to withdraw him from the state of sin in which he is, there can be no doubt but this good Mother will extend her powerful hand to him, will deliver him from his chains, and lead him to a state of salvation.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XIX.—HOW MUCH WE ARE OBLIGED TO LOVE JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Our Lord said one day to St. Teresa: "Everything which does not give pleasure to Me is vanity." Would

that all understood well this great truth! "For the rest, one thing is necessary." It is not necessary to be rich in this world, to gain the esteem of others, to lead a life of ease, to enjoy dignities, to have a reputation for learning: it is only necessary to love God and to do His will. For this single end has He created us, for this He preserves our life; and thus only can we gain admittance into Paradise. *Put me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm*—(Cant. viii. 6). The Lord thus speaks to all His espoused souls. Put Me as a seal upon Thy heart and upon thine arm, in order that all thy desires and actions may tend to Me; upon thy heart, that no other love but Mine may enter there; upon thine arm, in order that all thou dost may have Me for its sole object. Oh, how quickly does that soul speed onwards to perfection which in all her actions regards but Jesus crucified, and has no other desire than to gratify Him!

II.

To acquire, then, a true love of Jesus Christ should be our only care. The masters of the spiritual life describe the marks of true love. Love, say they, is *fearful*, and its fear is none other than that of displeasing God. It is *generous*, because, trusting in God, it is never daunted even at the greatest enterprises for His glory. It is *strong*, because it subdues all its evil appetites, even in the midst of the most violent temptations, and of the darkest desolations. It is *obedient*, because it immediately flies to execute the Divine will. It is *pure*, because it loves God alone, and for the sole reason that He deserves to be loved. It is *ardent*, because it would inflame all mankind, and willingly see them consumed with Divine love. It is *inebriating*, for it causes the soul to live as it were out of herself, as if she no longer saw, nor felt, nor had any more perception of earthly things, bent wholly on loving God. It is *unitive* by producing a close union between the will of the creature and the Will of the Creator. It is *longing*, for it fills the soul with desires of leaving this world, to fly and unite herself perfectly with God in her true and happy country, where she may love Him with all her strength.

Monday—Third Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

"HE HATH CALLED AGAINST ME THE TIME."

Some one will, perhaps, say: "I am young. Later on I will give myself to God." "How can you promise yourself another day," says St. Augustine, "when you know not whether you shall live another hour?" "If," says St. Teresa, "you are not prepared to die to-day, tremble lest you die an unhappy death."

I.

Someone will, perhaps, say: I am young. Later on I will give myself to God. But remember that the Gospel tells us that Jesus Christ cursed the fig-tree which He found without fruit, although the season for figs had not yet arrived. *It was not the time for figs*—(Mark xi. 13) By this the Saviour wished to signify that man at all times, even in youth, should produce fruits of good works; and that otherwise, like the fig-tree, he shall be cursed, and shall produce no fruit for the future. *May no man hereafter eat fruit of thee any more forever*—(Mark xi. 14). *Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for his wrath shall come on a sudden*—(Ecclus. v. 8). If you find your soul in the state of sin, delay not your repentance nor your Confession. Do not put them off even till to-morrow; for, if you do not obey the voice of God calling you to-day to confess your sins, death may this day overtake you in sin, and to-morrow there may be no hope of salvation for you. The devil regards the whole of our life as very short, and therefore he loses not a moment of time, but tempts us day and night. *The devil*

is come down unto you having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time—(Apoc. xii. 12). The enemy, then, never loses time in seeking to bring us to hell : and shall we squander the time God has given us to save our souls ?

You say : " I will hereafter give myself to God." But " why," answers St. Bernard, " do you, O miserable man, presume on the future, as if the Father placed time in your power ?" Why do you presume that you will hereafter give yourself to God, as if He had given to you the time and opportunity of returning to Him whenever you wish ? Job said with trembling that he knew not whether another moment of his life remained : *For I know not how long I shall continue, and whether after a while my maker may take me away*—(Job xxxii. 22). And you say : I will not go to Confession to-day ; I will think of it to-morrow. St. Augustine says : " How can you promise yourself another day when you know not whether you shall live another hour ?" " If," says St. Teresa, " you are not prepared to die to-day, tremble lest you die an unhappy death."

O my God, I give Thee thanks for giving me time now to bewail my sins, and to make amends by my love for all the offences I have committed against Thee.

II.

St. Bernard weeps over the blindness of those negligent Christians who squander the days of salvation, and never consider that a day once lost shall never return. At the hour of death they shall wish for another year, or for another day ; but they shall not have it : they shall then be told that time *shall be no more*—(Apoc. x. 6). What price would they then not give for another week, for a day, or even for an hour, to prepare the account which they must then render to God ? St. Laurence Justinian says that for a single hour they would give all their property, all their honours, and all their delights. But that hour shall not be granted to them. The priest who attends them shall say : Depart, depart immediately from this earth ; for you time is now no more. " *Go forth, O Christian soul, from this world.*"

What will it profit the sinner who has led an irregular life to exclaim at death : Oh, that I had led a life of sanctity ! Oh, that I had spent my years in loving God ! How great is the anguish of a traveller who, when the night has fallen, perceives that he has missed the way, and that there is no more time to correct his mistake ! Such shall be the anguish at death of those who have lived many years in the world, but have not spent them for God. *The night cometh when no man can work* —(John ix. 4). Hence the Redeemer says to all : *Walk whilst you have light, that the darkness overtake you not*—(John xii. 35). Walk in the way of salvation, now that you have the light, before you are surprised by the darkness of death in which you can do nothing. You can then only weep over the time you have lost.

He hath called against me the time—(Lam. i. 15). At the hour of death conscience will remind us of all the time we have had to become Saints, and which we have employed in multiplying our debts to God. It will remind us of all the calls and of all the graces God has given us to make us love Him, and which we have abused. At that awful moment we shall also see that the way of salvation is closed forever. In the midst of this remorse, and of the torturing darkness of death, the dying sinner shall say : O fool that I have been ! O life misspent ! O lost years in which I could have gained treasures of merits and become a Saint ! But I have neglected it, and now the time of saving my soul is gone forever ! But of what use will these wailings and lamentations be, when the scene of this world is about to close, the lamp is on the point of being extinguished, and when the dying Christian has arrived at that great moment on which eternity depends ?

O my God, what will become of me in the last moment of my life ? O Jesus, Who didst die for my salvation, suffer me not to be lost for ever ! Suffer me not to lose Thee, my only Good. No, my God, I will not lose Thee. If I have hitherto forfeited Thy friendship, I am sorry for it, and I sincerely repent of it. I will never lose Thee more.

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

XIV.—MARY IS THE MOTHER OF PENITENT SINNERS.

The doctrine that all prayers and works performed in a state of sin are sins was condemned as heretical by the sacred Council of Trent. St. Bernard says that although prayer in the mouth of a sinner is devoid of beauty, as it is unaccompanied by charity, nevertheless it is useful and obtains grace to abandon sin; for, as St. Thomas teaches, the prayer of a sinner, though without merit, is an act which obtains the grace of forgiveness, since the power of impetration is founded, not on the merits of him who asks, but on the Divine goodness, and the merits and promises of Jesus Christ, who has said, *Every one that asketh, receiveth*—(Luke xi. 10). The same thing must be said of the prayers offered to the Divine Mother. "If he who prays," says St. Anselm, "does not merit to be heard, the merits of the Mother, to whom he recommends himself, will intercede effectually."

Therefore St. Bernard exhorts all sinners to have recourse to Mary, invoking her with great confidence; for though the sinner does not himself merit the graces which he asks, yet he receives them, because this Blessed Virgin asks and obtains them from God, on account of her own merits. These are his words, addressing a sinner: "Because thou wast unworthy to receive the grace thyself, it was given to Mary, in order that, through her, thou mightest receive all." "If a mother," continues the same Saint, "knew that her two sons bore a mortal enmity to each other, and that each plotted against the other's life, would she not exert herself to her utmost in order to reconcile them? This would be the duty of a good mother. And thus it is," the Saint goes on to say, "that Mary acts; for she is the Mother of Jesus, and the Mother of men. When she sees a sinner at

enmity with Jesus Christ, she cannot endure it, and does all in her power to make peace between them. O happy Mary, thou art the Mother of the criminal and the Mother of the Judge; and being the Mother of both, they are thy children, and thou canst not endure discords amongst them."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XX.—HOW MUCH WE ARE OBLIGED TO LOVE JESUS CHRIST.

I.

No one teaches us so well the real characteristics and practice of Charity as the great preacher of Charity, St. Paul. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians he says, in the first place, that without Charity man is nothing, and that nothing profits him : *If I should have all faith, so that I could move mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing* —(1 Cor. xiii. 2, 3). So that even should a person have Faith strong enough to remove mountains, like St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, but had not Charity, it would profit him nothing. Should he give all his goods to the poor, and even willingly suffer Martyrdom, but be wanting in Charity—should he do it, that is, for any other end than that of pleasing God, it would profit him nothing at all.

O most lovely and most loving Heart of Jesus, miserable is the heart which does not love Thee ! O God, for the love of men Thou didst die on the Cross, helpless and forsaken, and how then can men live so forgetful of Thee ! O love of God ! O ingratitude of man ! O men, O men ! do but cast one look on the innocent Son of God, agonising on the Cross and dying for you, in order to satisfy the Divine justice for your sins, and by this means to allure you to love Him. Observe how, at the same time,

He prays His Eternal Father to forgive you. Behold Him, and love Him! Ah, my Jesus, how small is the number of those that love Thee! Wretched, too, am I; for I also have lived so many years unmindful of Thee, and have grievously offended Thee, my beloved Redeemer! It is not so much the punishment I have deserved that makes me weep, as the love which Thou hast borne me.

II.

St. Paul gives us the marks of true Charity, and at the same time teaches us the practice of those virtues which are the daughters of Charity; and he goes on to says: *Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up, is not ambitious; seeketh not her own; is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in inquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*—(1 Cor. xiii.). Let us, therefore, consider these holy practices, that we may thus see if the love which we owe to Jesus Christ truly reigns within us; as likewise that we may understand in what virtues we should chiefly exercise ourselves, in order to persevere and advance in this holy love.

O sorrows of Jesus! O ignominies of Jesus! O Wounds of Jesus! O death of Jesus! O love of Jesus! Rest deeply engraved in my heart, and may your sweet recollection be for ever fixed there, to wound me and inflame me continually with His love. I love Thee, my Jesus; I love Thee, my sovereign Good; I love Thee, my Love and my All; I love Thee, and I will love Thee for ever. Oh, suffer me never more to forsake Thee, never more to lose Thee! Make me entirely Thine; do so by the merits of Thy death. In this I firmly trust. And I have a great confidence also in thy intercession, O Mary, my Queen; make me love Jesus Christ, and make me also love thee, my Mother and my hope!

Tuesday—Third Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

"WHILST WE HAVE TIME, LET US WORK GOOD."

Death may not, perhaps, come upon us for twenty or thirty years; but it may come very soon; perhaps in a year or a month. And still we lose our time, and, instead of adjusting our accounts, we go on multiplying our sins, which will merit the sentence of eternal death. *While we have time, let us work good.*

1.

Be you then also ready; for, at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come—(Luke xii. 40). The Lord says: "Be ready." He does not tell us to prepare ourselves when death approaches, but *to be ready* for His coming; because when we are thinking least of death the Son of man will come and demand an account of our whole life. In the confusion of death it will be most difficult to adjust our accounts so as to stand guiltless before the tribunal of Jesus Christ. Death may not perhaps come upon us for twenty or thirty years; but it may also come very soon, perhaps in a year or in a month. If any one had reason to fear that a trial should take place on which his life depended, he certainly would not wait for the day of the trial, but would, as soon as possible, employ an advocate to plead his cause. And what are we doing? We know for certain that we must one day be judged, and that on the result of that judgment depends not on temporal, but eternal life. We also know that that day may be very near at hand; and still we lose our time, and, instead of adjusting our

accounts, we go on daily multiplying our sins which will merit the sentence of eternal death.

If, then, we have hitherto offended God, let us henceforth endeavour to bewail our misfortune for the remainder of our life, and say continually with the penitent King Ezechias : *I will recount to thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul*—(Is. xxxviii. 15). The Lord gives us the remaining days of life that we may make up for the time that has been badly spent. *Whilst we have time, let us work good.*—(Gal. vi. 10). Let us not provoke the Lord to punish us by an unhappy death; and if, during the years that are passed, we have been foolish, and have offended Him, let us now attend to the Apostle exhorting us to be wise for the future, and to redeem the time we have lost.

O Lord, how wretched I have been in having for so many years gone after the vanities of the world and left Thee, my sovereign Good! But from this day forward I desire to possess Thee as my only Treasure, as the only Love of my soul.

II.

See, therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly, not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil . . . understanding what is the will of God.—(Ephes. v. 15, 17). *The days are evil.* According to St. Anselm, the meaning of these words is that the days of this life are evil, because in them we are exposed to a thousand temptations and to the danger of eternal misery; therefore, to escape perdition, all possible care is necessary. "What," says St. Augustine, "is meant by redeeming the time, unless, when necessary, to submit to temporal loss in order to gain eternal goods?" We should live only to fulfil with all diligence the Divine will; and, should it be necessary, it is better to suffer in temporal things, than to neglect our eternal interests.

Oh, how well did St. Paul redeem the time he had lost! St. Jerome says that, though the last of the Apostles, he was, on account of his great labours, the first in merits. "Paul, the last in order, but the first in merits, because he laboured more than all." Let us consider that, in

each moment, we may lay up greater treasures of eternal goods. If the possession of all the land round which you could walk, or of all the money you could count in a day, were promised you, would you lose time? Would you not instantly begin to walk over the ground, or to reckon the money? You now have it in your power to acquire, in each moment, eternal treasures; and will you notwithstanding, waste your time? Do not say that what you can do to-day you can also do to-morrow; because this day will be then lost to you, and shall never return. You have to-day; but perhaps to-morrow will not be given you.

I give Thee thanks, O my God, for having waited for me. What would have become of me had I died one of those nights in which I went to rest under Thy displeasure! But as Thou hast waited patiently for me, it is a sign that Thou wishest to pardon me. Pardon me, then, O my Jesus! I am sorry, and I will never sin again.

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

XV.—MARY IS THE MOTHER OF PENITENT SINNERS.

This most benign Lady only requires that the sinner should recommend himself to her, and purpose amendment. When Mary sees a sinner at her feet, imploring her mercy, she does not consider the crimes with which he is loaded, but the intention with which he comes; and if the intention is good, even should he have committed all possible sins, the most loving Mother embraces him, and does not disdain to heal the wounds of his soul; for she is not only called the Mother of Mercy but is so, truly and indeed, and shows herself such by the love and tenderness with which she assists us all. And this is precisely what the Blessed Virgin herself said to St. Bridget: "However much a man sins, I am ready

immediately to receive him when he repents; nor do I pay attention to the number of his sins, but only to the intention with which he comes: I do not disdain to anoint and heal his wounds; for I am called, and truly am, the Mother of Mercy."

Mary is the Mother of sinners who wish to repent, and as their Mother she cannot do otherwise than compassionate them; nay, more, she seems to feel the miseries of her poor children as if they were her own. When the Canaanitish woman begged our Lord to deliver her daughter from the devil who possessed her, she said: *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil*—(Matt. xv. 22). But since the daughter, and not the mother, was tormented, she should rather have said, "Lord, take compassion *on my daughter*" and not *Have mercy on me*: but no, she said *Have mercy on me*, and she was right; for the sufferings of children are felt by their mothers as if they were their own. And it is precisely thus, says Richard of St. Laurence, that Mary prays to God when she recommends a sinner to Him who has had recourse to her; she cries out for the sinful soul: "Have mercy on *me*!" "My Lord," she seems to say, "this poor soul that is in sin is my daughter, and therefore, pity not so much her as me, who am her Mother."

Would that all sinners had recourse to this sweet Mother, for then certainly all would be pardoned by God. "O Mary," exclaims St. Bonaventure in rapturous astonishment, "thou embracest with maternal affection a sinner despised by the whole world, nor dost thou leave him until thou hast reconciled the poor creature with his Judge"—meaning, that the sinner, whilst in the state of sin, is hated and loathed by all, even by inanimate creatures; fire, air, and earth would chastise him, and avenge the honour of their outraged Lord. But if this unhappy creature flies to Mary, will Mary reject him? Oh, no: provided he goes to her for help and in order to amend she will embrace him with the affection of a Mother, and will not let him go, until, by her powerful intercession, she has reconciled him with God and reinstated him in grace.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XXI.—"CHARITY IS PATIENT."—THE SOUL THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST LOVES TO SUFFER.

I.

This earth is the place for meriting, and therefore it is a place for suffering. Our true country, where God has prepared for us repose in everlasting joy, is Paradise. We have but a short time to stay in this world; but in this short time we have many labours to undergo: *Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries*—(Job xiv. 1). We must suffer, and all must suffer: be they just or be they sinners, each one must carry his cross. He that carries it with patience is saved; he that carries it with impatience is lost. St. Augustine says the same miseries send some to Paradise and some to hell: "One and the same blow lifts the good to glory and reduces the bad to ashes." The same Saint observes that by the test of suffering the chaff in the Church of God is distinguished from the wheat: he that humbles himself under tribulations, and is resigned to the will of God, is wheat for Paradise; he that grows haughty and is enraged, and so forsakes God, is chaff for hell.

II.

On the day when the cause of our salvation shall be decided, our life must be found conformable to the life of Jesus Christ, if we would enjoy the happy sentence of the predestined: *For whom he foreknew he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son*—(Rom. viii. 29). This was the end for which the Eternal Word descended upon earth, to teach us, by His example, to carry with patience the cross which God sends us: *Christ suffered for us*, wrote St. Peter, *leaving you an example, that you should follow his steps*—(1 Pet.

ii. 21). So that Jesus Christ suffered on purpose to encourage us to suffer. O God! what a life was that of Jesus Christ! a life of ignominy and pain! The Prophet calls our Redeemer *despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows*—(Is. liii. 3). A man held in contempt, and treated as the lowest, the vilest among men, a *man of sorrows*; yes, for the life of Jesus Christ was made up of hardships and afflictions.

Wednesday—Third Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

CHARITY PRACTISED IN WORKS.

My little children, says St. John, *let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth*—(1 John iii. 18). Some say they sincerely love their neighbours, but they will not submit to inconvenience for the sake of any of them. To fulfil the precept of charity it is not enough to love our neighbour in words; we must love him in deed and in truth.

I.

Some say they sincerely love all their neighbours, but they will not put themselves to inconvenience for the sake of any of them. *My little children*, says St. John, *let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and* truth. The Scripture tells us that alms deliver men from death, cleanse them from sin, and obtain for them the Divine mercy and eternal life. *Alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting*—(Tob. xii. 9).

God will relieve you in the same manner in which you give relief to your neighbour. *With what measure you mete it shall be measured to you again*—(Matth. vii. 2). Hence St. John Chrysostom says that the exercise of charity to others is the means of acquiring great gain with God. "Alms is, of all acts, the most lucrative." And St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say that she felt more happy in relieving her neighbour than when she was wrapt in contemplation. "Because," she would add, "when I am in contemplation God assists me; but in giving relief to a neighbour I assist God"; for, every act of charity we exercise towards our neighbour, God accepts as done to Himself. But, on the other hand, as St. John says, can he who does not assist a brother in want be said to love God? *He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him?*—(1 John iii. 17). By alms is understood not only the distribution of money and other goods, but every succour given to a neighbour in order to relieve his wants. It is related of St. Teresa that she was accustomed to perform every day some act of charity towards her sisters in Religion, and whenever she was unable to do so during the day she would be careful at night to show light to the sisters who might be passing in the dark before her cell. The Saints were full of charity and compassion to all who required their assistance. *The just are merciful and show mercy*—(Prov. xiii. 13).

II.

The exercise of special charity towards the sick is also very pleasing to God. Serving them has far greater merit than serving those who are in health. The sick stand in greater need of assistance than those who are well. They are afflicted by pain, melancholy, and the fear of death, and are sometimes even abandoned by all. Oh, how pleasing it is to God to labour to console them in their afflictions! St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi assisted and served the sick, and desired to live in some hospital in order to be always employed in an office so pleasing to God. "If you wish to know," Father Anthony Torres

used to say, "whether the Spirit of God reigns in a community, ask how the sick are treated." All who tend to perfection practise charity towards the sick. Be careful, then, to relieve the sick by alms, or by little presents, and to serve them as well as you can, at least by endeavouring to console them by your words, by exhortations to practise resignation to God's will, and to offer Him all their sufferings. Do not look for thanks; but bear with their complaints, impatience, and rudeness. The Lord Himself will reward your charity. It is related in the *Chronicles of the Teresians* that Sr. Isabella of the Angels was seen ascending to Heaven immediately after death and carried by Angels amid great splendour. She said to a Religious to whom she appeared afterwards that God had bestowed that glory on her for her charity towards the sick.

Spiritual Reading.

SALVE, REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIÆ! HAIL, HOLY QUEEN, MOTHER OF MERCY!

XVI.—MARY IS THE MOTHER OF PENITENT SINNERS.

In the Second Book of Kings—(2 Kings xiv. 5), we read that a wise woman of Thecua addressed King David this wise: *My lord, I had two sons, and for my misfortune one killed the other; so that I have now lost one and justice demands the other, the only one that is left; take compassion on a poor mother, and let me not thus be deprived of both.* David, moved with compassion towards the mother, declared that the delinquent should be set at liberty and restored to her. Mary seems to say the same thing when God is indignant against a sinner who has recommended himself to her. "My God," she says, "I had two sons, Jesus and man; man took the life of my Jesus on the Cross, and now Thy justice would condemn the guilty one. O Lord, my Jesus is already dead, have pity on me, and if I have lost the one, do not make me lose the other also."

Most certainly God will not condemn those sinners who have recourse to Mary, and for whom she prays, since He Himself commended them to her as her children. The devout Lanspergius supposes our Lord speaking in the following terms: "I recommended all, but especially sinners to Mary, as her children, and therefore is she so diligent and so careful in the exercise of her office that she allows none of those committed to her charge, and especially those who invoke her, to perish, but, as far as she can, brings all to Me." "And who can ever tell," says the devout Blosius, "the goodness, the mercy, the compassion, the love, the benignity, the clemency, the fidelity, the benevolence, the charity, of this Virgin Mother towards men? It is such that no words can express it."

"Let us, then," says St. Bernard, "cast ourselves at the feet of this good Mother, and, embracing them, let us not depart until she blesses us, and thus accepts us for her children." And who can ever doubt the compassion of this Mother? St. Bonaventure used to say: "Even should she take my life, I would still hope in her; and, full of confidence, would desire to die before her image and be certain of salvation." And thus should each sinner address her when he has recourse to this compassionate Mother; he should say:

"My Lady and Mother, on account of my sins I deserve that thou shouldst reject me, and even that thou shouldst thyself chastise me according to my deserts; but shouldst thou reject me, or even take my life, I will still trust in thee, and hope with a firm hope that thou wilt save me. In thee is all my confidence; only grant me the consolation of dying before thy picture, recommending myself to thy mercy, then I am convinced that I shall not be lost, but that I shall go and praise thee in Heaven in company with so many of thy servants who left this world calling on thee for help, and have all been saved by thy powerful intercession."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XII.—"CHARITY IS PATIENT."—THE SOUL THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST LOVES TO SUFFER.

I.

Now in the same manner as God has treated His beloved Son, so does He treat every one whom He loves, and whom He receives for His son: *For whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth; and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*—(Heb. xii. 6). For this reason He one day said to St. Teresa: "Know that the souls dearest to My Father are those who are afflicted with the greatest sufferings." Hence the Saint said of all her troubles that she would not exchange them for all the treasures in the world. She appeared after her death to a soul, and revealed to her that she enjoyed an immense reward in Heaven, not so much for her good works as for the sufferings she cheerfully bore in this life for the love of God; and that if she could possibly entertain a wish to return upon earth, the only reason would be in order that she might suffer more for God.

II.

He that loves God in suffering earns a double reward in Paradise. St. Vincent de Paul said that it was a great misfortune to be free from suffering in this life. And he added that a Congregation or an individual that does not suffer, and is applauded by all the world, is not far from a fall. It was on this account that St. Francis of Assisi, on the day that he had suffered nothing for God, became afraid lest God had forgotten him. St. John Chrysostom says that when God endows a man with the grace of suffering, He gives him a greater grace than that of raising the dead to life; because in performing miracles man remains God's debtor; whereas in suffering, God makes Himself the debtor of man. And he adds that

whoever endures something for God, even had he no other gift than the strength to suffer for the God Whom he loves, would obtain for himself an immense reward. Wherefore he affirmed that he considered St. Paul to have received a greater grace in being bound in chains for Jesus Christ than in being rapt to the Third Heaven in ecstasy.

Thursday—Third Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

CHARITY TOWARDS THE NEIGHBOUR'S SOUL

He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way shall save his soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins—(James v. 20). Would it not be cruelty in him who would see a blind man walking over a precipice and not admonish him of his danger and thus rescue him from temporal death? But it would be still greater cruelty to neglect, when able, to deliver a neighbour from eternal death.

I.

The most perfect charity consists in zeal for your neighbour's spiritual good. To relieve the spiritual necessities of a fellow-man, or to contribute to his spiritual welfare, as far excels the exercise of charity towards his body as the dignity of the soul transcends the lowly condition of the flesh. Charity towards the soul is practised, in the first place, by correcting our neighbour's faults. St. James declares *that he who causes a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his*

ul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins -(James v. 20). But on the other hand, St. Augustine ays that he who sees a neighbour destroying his soul, y giving way to anger against a neighbour, or by sulting him, and neglects to correct him, sins more rievously by his silence than the other does by his sults and contumely. "You," says the Saint, "see im perish, and care not; your silence is more criminal an his reproachful language." Do not excuse yourself y saying that you know not how to correct him. t. John Chrysostom tells you that for correcting the ults of others charity is more necessary than wisdom. ake the correction at a seasonable time, with charity nd sweetness, and it will be profitable. If you are a uperior, you are bound by your office to correct those nder you; if not, you are bound in charity to administer orrection as often as you expect fruit from it. Would not be cruelty in him who should see a blind man alking over a precipice not to admonish him of his anger, and thus rescue him from temporal death? But would be still greater cruelty in you to neglect, when ble, to deliver a neighbour from eternal death. If you udently judge that your advice would be unprofitable, e careful at least to make known the fault to some other erson who will be able to apply a remedy. Do not say, his is not my business; I will not take any trouble out it. This was the language of Cain. *Am I*, said *my brother's keeper*—(Gen. iv. 9). It is the duty of very one, when able, to save his neighbour from ruin. *nd*, says Ecclesiasticus, *he gave to every one of them mmandment concerning his neighbour*—(Ecclus. xvii.).

II.

St. Philip Neri says that, when necessary, God wishes at we omit mental prayer in order to assist a neighbour, particularly in his spiritual necessities. St. Gertrude desired one day to entertain herself in prayer, but work of charity was to be performed, and therefore the Lord said to her: "Tell me, Gertrude, do you intend at I should serve you, or that you should serve Me?"

" If," says St. Gregory, " you go to God, take care not to go alone to Him." And Saint Augustine says : " If you love God, draw all to the love of God." If you love God you should take care not to be alone in loving Him, but should labour to bring to His love all your relatives, and all those with whom you have intercourse.

To appear devout, mortified, devoted to mental prayer and to frequent Communion, in order to give good example to others, in order to induce others to do likewise, is not an act of vanity, but an act of charity, very pleasing to God. *So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven*—(Matt. v. 16).

Endeavour, then, to assist all according to the best of your ability, by words, works, and particularly by prayers. Many Doctors, along with St. Basil, teach, that by the words *Amen I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you*—(John xvi. 23), Jesus Christ promises to hear our prayers, not only for ourselves, but also for others, provided they do not place a positive obstacle in the way. Hence, in the common prayer, in your Thanksgiving after Communion, and your Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, you should never omit to recommend to God all poor sinners, infidels, and heretics, and all that live without God.

How pleasing to Jesus Christ are the prayers of His spouses for sinners! He once said to the Venerable Sister Seraphina de Capri : " Assist Me, O My daughter, to save souls by your prayers." To Mary Magdalen de Pazzi he said : " See, Magdalen, how Christians are in the hands of the devil; unless my elect by their prayers deliver them, they will be devoured." Hence the Saint used to say to her Religious : " My sisters, God has not separated us from the world only for our own good, but also for the benefit of sinners." And on another occasion she said : " My sisters, we have to render to God an account for so many lost souls : had we recommended them to God with fervour, perhaps they would not be damned." Hence we read in her life that she did not allow an hour of the day to pass without praying for sinners. Oh, how many souls are sometimes converted

not so much by the sermons of priests as by the prayers of Religious! It was once revealed to a preacher that the fruit which he produced was not the effect of his sermons, but of the prayers of a lay-brother who assisted him at the pulpit. Be careful, also, to pray for priests, that they may labour with true zeal for the salvation of souls.

Spiritual Reading.

VITA, DULCEDO! HAIL, OUR LIFE, OUR SWEETNESS!

XVII.—MARY IS OUR LIFE, BECAUSE SHE OBTAINS FOR US THE PARDON OF OUR SINS.

To understand why the holy Church makes us call Mary our life we must know that, as the soul gives life to the body, so does Divine grace give life to the soul; for a soul without grace has the name of being alive but is in truth dead, as it was said of one in the Apocalypse, *Thou hast the name of being alive and thou art dead*—(Apoc. iii. 1). Mary, then, in obtaining this grace for sinners by her intercession, restores them to life.

See how the Church makes Mary speak, applying to her the following words of Proverbs: *They that in the morning early watch for me shall find me*—(Prov. viii. 17). They who are diligent in having recourse to me in the morning, that is, as soon as they can, will most certainly find me. In the Septuagint the words *shall find me* are rendered "shall find grace." So that to have recourse to Mary is the same thing as to find the grace of God. A little further on she says, *He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord*—(Prov. viii. 35). "Listen," exclaims St. Bonaventure on these words, "listen, all you who desire the kingdom of God: honour the most Blessed Virgin Mary, and you will find life and eternal salvation."

St. Bernardine of Sienna says that if God did not destroy man after his first sin, it was on account of His

singular love for this holy Virgin, who was destined to be born of this race. And the Saint adds that he "has no doubt but that all the mercies granted by God under the old dispensation were granted only in consideration of this most Blessed Lady."

Hence St. Bernard was right in exhorting us "to seek for grace, and to seek it by Mary"; meaning, that if we have had the misfortune to lose the grace of God, we should seek to recover it, but we should do so through Mary; for, though we may have lost it, she has found it; and hence the Saint calls her "the finder of grace." The Angel Gabriel expressly declared this for our consolation when he saluted the Blessed Virgin saying, *Fear not, Mary, thou hast found grace*—(Luke i. 30). But if Mary had never been deprived of grace, how could the Archangel say that she had then found it? A thing may be found by a person who did not previously possess it; but we are told by the same Archangel that the Blessed Virgin was always with God, always in grace, nay, full of grace. *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee* —(Luke i. 28). Since Mary, then, did not find grace for herself, she being always full of it, for whom did she find it? Cardinal Hugo, in his commentary on the above text, replies that she found it for sinners who had lost it. "Let sinners, then," says this devout writer, "who by their crimes have lost grace, address themselves to the Blessed Virgin, for with her they will surely find it; let them humbly salute her, and say with confidence, "Lady, that which has been found must be restored to him who has lost it; restore us, therefore, our property which thou hast found." On this subject, Richard of St. Laurence concludes, "that if we hope to recover the grace of God we must go to Mary, who has found it, and finds it always." And as she always was and always will be dear to God, if we have recourse to her we shall certainly succeed.

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Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST

XXIII.—"CHARITY IS PATIENT."—THE SOUL THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST LOVES TO SUFFER.

I.

But patience has a perfect work—(James i. 4). The meaning of this is that nothing is more pleasing to God than to see a soul suffering with patience all the crosses sent her by Him. The effect of love is to liken the lover to the person loved. St. Francis de Sales said: "All the Wounds of Christ are so many mouths which preach to us that we must suffer for Him. The science of the Saints is to suffer constantly for Jesus; and in this way we shall soon become Saints." A person that loves Jesus Christ is anxious to be treated like Jesus Christ,—poor, persecuted and despised. St. John beheld all the Saints clothed in white and with palms in their hands: *Clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands*—(Apoc. vii. 9). The palm is the symbol of Martyrs, and yet all the Saints did not suffer Martyrdom; why, then, do all the Saints bear palms in their hands? St. Gregory replies that all the Saints have been Martyrs either of the sword or of patience; so that, he adds, "we can be Martyrs without the sword if we keep patience."

II.

The merit of a soul that loves Jesus Christ consists in loving and in suffering. Hear what our Lord said to St. Teresa: "Think you, My child, that merit consists in enjoyment? No; it consists in suffering and in loving. Look at My life, wholly embittered with afflictions. Be assured, My child, that the more My Father loves any one the more sufferings He sends him; they are the standard of His love. Look at My Wounds; your torments will never reach so far. It is foolish to suppose that My Father favours with His friendship those who

are strangers to suffering." And, for our consolation, St. Teresa makes this remark : " God never sends a trial but He forthwith rewards it with some favour." One day Jesus Christ appeared to the Blessed Baptista Varani, and told her of three special favours which He is wont to bestow on cherished souls : the first, *not to sin*; the second, which is greater, *to perform good works*; the third, and the greatest of all, *to suffer for His love.* So that St. Teresa used to say, whenever anyone does something for God, the Almighty repays him with some trial. And therefore the Saints, on receiving tribulations, thanked God for them. St. Louis of France, referring to his captivity among the Turks, said : " I rejoice, and thank God more for the patience which He accorded me in the time of my imprisonment than if He had made me master of the Universe." And when St. Elizabeth, princess of Thuringia, after her husband's death, was banished with her son from the kingdom and found herself homeless and abandoned by all, she went to a convent of the Franciscans and there had the *Te Deum* sung in thanksgiving to God for the signal favour of being allowed to suffer for His love.

Friday—Third Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST OUR HOPE.

What art thou afraid of, O sinner? How shall He condemn thee penitent, Who dies that you may not be condemned? *Behold*, He says, *I have graven thee upon my hands.* I keep thee engraven upon My hands in these Wounds I have suffered for thee. Love Me and have confidence.

I.

Oh, how great is the hope of salvation which the Death of Jesus Christ imparts to us : *Who is he that shall condemn? Christ Jesus who died, who also maketh intercession for us*—(Rom. viii. 34). Who is it, asks the Apostle, that has to condemn us? It is that same Redeemer Who, in order not to condemn us to eternal death, condemned Himself to a cruel death upon a Cross. From this St. Thomas of Villanova encourages us, saying : What dost thou fear, sinner, if thou art willing to leave off thy sin? How should that Lord condemn thee, Who died in order not to condemn thee? How should He drive thee away when thou returnest to His feet, He Who came from Heaven to seek thee when thou wert fleeing from Him? "What are thou afraid of, sinner? How shall He condemn thee penitent, Who dies that you may not be condemned? How shall He cast thee off returning, Who came from Heaven seeking thee?" But greater still is the encouragement given us by this same Saviour of ours when, speaking by Isaias, He says : *Behold, I have graven thee upon my hands; thy walls are always before my eyes*—(Is. xlix. 16). Be not distrustful, My sheep; see how much thou didst cost Me. I keep thee engraven upon My hands in these Wounds which I have suffered for thee; these are ever reminding Me to help thee, and to defend thee from thine enemies : love Me, and have confidence.

Yes, my Jesus, I love Thee and feel confidence in Thee. To rescue me, yea, this has cost Thee dear; to save me will cost Thee nothing. It is Thy will that all should be saved, and that none should perish. If my sins cause me to dread, Thy goodness reassures me, more desirous as Thou art to do me good than I am to receive it. Ah, my beloved Redeemer, I will say to Thee with Job : Even though Thou shouldst kill me, yet I will hope in Thee, and Thou wilt be my Saviour—(Job xiii). Wert Thou even to drive me away from Thy Presence. O my Love, yet I would not leave off from hoping in Thee, Who art my Saviour. Too much do these Wounds of Thine and this Blood encourage me to hope for every good from

Thy mercy. I love Thee, O dear Jesus; I love Thee, and I trust in Thee.

II.

The glorious St. Bernard one day in sickness saw himself before the Judgment-seat of God, where the devil was accusing him of his sins, and telling him that he did not deserve Paradise: "It is true that I deserve not Paradise," the Saint replied, "but Jesus has a twofold title to this kingdom—in the first place, as being by nature Son of God; in the next place, as having purchased it by His Death. He contents Himself with the first of these, and the second He makes over to me; and therefore it is that I ask and hope for Paradise." We, too, can say the same; for St. Paul tells us that the will of Jesus Christ to die, consumed by sufferings, had for its end the obtaining of Paradise for all sinners that are penitent and resolved to amend. And hence the Apostle subjoins: *Let us run . . . to the fight proposed unto us, looking on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, who, having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame*—(Heb. xii. 1, 2). Let us go forth with courage to fight against our enemies, fixing our eyes on Jesus Christ, Who, together with the merits of His Passion, offers us the victory and the crown.

He has told us that He is gone to Heaven to prepare a place for us: *Let not your heart be troubled . . . I go to prepare a place for you*—(John xiv. 1, 2). He has told, and is continually telling His Father that since He has consigned us to Him, He wishes us to be with Him in Paradise: *Father, those whom thou hast given me, I will that where I am they also may be with me*—(John xvii. 24). And what greater mercy could we have hoped for from the Lord, says St. Anselm, than for the Eternal Father to have said to a sinner, already for crimes condemned to hell, and with no means of delivering himself from its punishments: Take thou My Son, and offer Him in thy place? And for the same Son to have said: Take Me, and deliver thyself from hell? "What greater mercy can we imagine than that to one who, being a sinner, cannot redeem himself, God the Father should say:

Accept of My only-begotten Son, and deliver Him over to be punished in thy stead; and that the Son should say: Take Me, and redeem thyself?"

Ah, my loving Father, I thank Thee for having given me this Thy Son for my Saviour; I offer to Thee His death; and, for the sake of His merits, I pray Thee for mercy. And ever do I return thanks to Thee, my Redeemer, for having given Thy Blood and Thy Life to deliver me from eternal death. "We pray Thee, therefore, help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood." Help, then, us, Thy rebellious servants, since Thou hast redeemed us at so great a cost. O Jesus, my one and only Hope, Thou dost love me. Thou hast power to do all things; make me a Saint. If I am weak, do Thou give me strength; if I am sick, in consequence of the sins I have committed, do Thou apply to my soul one drop of Thy Blood and heal me. Give me love of Thee and final perseverance, making me die in Thy grace. Give me Paradise; through Thy merits do I ask it of Thee, and hope to obtain it. I love Thee, O my most lovely God, with all my soul; and I hope to love Thee always. Oh, help a miserable sinner who wishes to love Thee alone!

Spiritual Reading.

VITA, DULCEDO! HAIL, OUR LIFE, OUR SWEETNESS!

XVIII.—MARY IS OUR LIFE, BECAUSE SHE OBTAINS FOR US THE PARDON OF OUR SINS.

Mary says, in the eighth chapter of the sacred Canticles, that God has placed her in the world to be our defence: *I am a wall: and my breasts are as a tower*—(Cant. viii. 10). And she is truly made a mediatress of peace between sinners and God: *Since I am become in his presence as one finding peace.* On these words St. Bernard encourages sinners, saying: "Go to this Mother of Mercy and show her the wounds which thy sins

have left on thy soul; then will she certainly entreat her Son, by the breasts that gave Him suck, to pardon thee all. And this Divine Son, Who loves her so tenderly, will most certainly grant her petition." In this sense it is that the holy Church, in her almost daily prayer, calls upon us to beg our Lord to grant us the powerful help of the intercession of Mary to rise from our sins: "Grant Thy help to our weakness, O most merciful God; and that we who are mindful of the holy Mother of God may, by the help of her intercession, rise from our iniquities."

With reason, then, does St. Laurence Justinian call her "the hope of malefactors," since she alone is the one who obtains them pardon from God. With reason does St. Bernard call her "the sinners ladder," since she, the most compassionate Queen, extending her hand to them, draws them from an abyss of sin, and enables them to ascend to God. With reason does an ancient writer call her "the only hope of sinners," for by her help alone can we hope for the remission of our sins.

St. John Chrysostom also says "that sinners receive pardon by the intercession of Mary alone." And therefore the Saint, in the name of all sinners, thus addresses her: "Hail, Mother of God and of us all; Heaven where God dwells; throne, from which our Lord dispenses all grace; glory of our Church, assiduously pray to Jesus that in the Day of Judgment we may find mercy through thee, and receive the reward prepared by God for those who love Him."

With reason, finally, is Mary called, in the words of the sacred Canticles, the dawn: *Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?*—(Cant. vi. 9). Yes, says Pope Innocent III, "for as the dawn is the end of night and the beginning of day, well may the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was the end of vices, be called the dawn of day." When devotion towards Mary begins in a soul it produces the same effect that the birth of this most Holy Virgin produced in the world. It puts an end to the night of sin, and leads the soul into the path of virtue. Therefore St. Germanus says: "O Mother of God, thy protection never ceases, thy intercession is life, and thy patronage never fails." And in a sermon the

same Saint says that to pronounce the name of Mary with affection is a sign of life in the soul, or at least, that life will soon return there.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XXIV.—"CHARITY IS PATIENT."—THE SOUL THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST LOVES TO SUFFER.

I.

St. Joseph Calasanctius used to say: "All suffering is slight to gain Heaven." And the Apostle had already said the same: *The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us*—(Rom. viii. 18). It would be a great gain for us to endure all the torments of all the Martyrs during our whole lives in order to enjoy one single moment of the bliss of Paradise. With what readiness, then, should we embrace our crosses, when we know that the sufferings of this transitory life will gain for us an everlasting beatitude! *That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory*—(2 Cor. iv. 17). St. Agapitus, while still a mere boy in years, was threatened by the tyrant to have his head covered with a red-hot helmet; on which he replied: "And what better fortune could possibly befall me than to lose my head here, to have it crowned hereafter in Heaven?" This thought made St. Francis exclaim:

> "I look for such a meed of bliss,
> That all my pains seem happiness."

But whoever desires the crown of Paradise must needs combat and suffer: *if we suffer, we shall also reign*—(2 Tim. ii. 12). We cannot get a reward without merit; and no merit is to be had without patience: *He is not crowned, except he strive lawfully*—(2 Tim. ii. 5). And

the person that strives with the greatest patience shall have the greatest reward.

What a strange thing it is! When the temporal goods of this world are in question, worldlings endeavour to procure as much as they can; but when it is a question of the goods of eternal life, they say: "It is enough if we get a little corner in Heaven!" Such is not the language of the Saints; they are satisfied with anything whatever in this life, nay more, they strip themselves of all earthly goods; but concerning eternal goods, they strive to obtain them in as large a measure as possible. I would ask which of the two act with more wisdom and prudence?

II.

But even with regard to the present life it is certain that he who suffers with most patience enjoys the greatest peace. It was a saying of St. Philip Neri that in this world there is no Purgatory; it is either all Paradise or all hell: he that patiently supports tribulations enjoys a Paradise; he that does not do so suffers a hell. Yes, for, as St. Teresa writes, he that embraces the crosses sent him by God feels them not. St. Francis de Sales, finding himself on one occasion beset on every side with tribulations, said: "For some time back the severe oppositions and secret contrarieties which have befallen me afford me so sweet a peace that nothing can equal it; and they give me such an assurance that my soul will ere long be firmly united with God that I can say with all truth that they are the sole ambition, the sole desire of my heart." And, indeed, peace can never be found by one who leads an irregular life, but only by him who lives in union with God and with His blessed will. A certain missionary of a Religious Order, while in the Indies, was one day standing to witness the execution of a person under sentence of death, and already on the scaffold; the criminal called the missionary to him, and said: "You must know, Father, that I was once a member of your Order. Whilst I observed the rules I led a very happy life; but when, afterwards, I began to relax in the strict observance of them, I immediately

experienced pain in everything; so much so that I abandoned the Religious life and gave myself up to vice, which has finally reduced me to the melancholy pass in which you at present behold me." And in conclusion he said, "I tell you this that my example may be a warning to others." The venerable Father Lewis da Ponte said: "Take the sweet things of this life for bitter, and the bitter for sweet; and so you will be in the constant enjoyment of peace. Yes, for though the sweet are pleasant to sense they invariably leave behind them the bitterness of remorse of conscience, on account of the imperfect satisfaction which, for the most part, they afford; but the bitter when taken with patience from the hand of God, become sweet and dear to the souls who love Him."

Saturday—Third Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

HAVING RECOURSE TO MARY.

"The Queen of Heaven is so gracious and liberal," says St. Andrew of Crete, "that she recompenses her servants with the greatest munificence for the most trifling devotions." "But," says St. Bernard, "perseverance alone will merit a crown." Oh, how many are there now in hell who would have been saved had they only persevered in the devotions they once practised in honour of Mary!

I.

"The Queen of Heaven is so gracious and liberal," says St. Andrew of Crete, "that she recompenses her

servants with the greatest munificence for the most trifling devotions." Two conditions, however, there are :

The first is that when we offer her our devotions our souls should be free from sin; otherwise she would address us as she addressed a wicked soldier spoken of by St. Peter Celestine. This soldier every day performed some devotion in honour of our Blessed Lady. One day he was suffering greatly from hunger when Mary appeared to him and offered him some most delicious meats, but in so filthy a vessel that he could not bring himself to taste them. " I am the Mother of God," the Blessed Virgin then said, " and am come to satisfy thy hunger." " But, O Lady," he answered, " I cannot eat out of so defiled a vessel." " And how," replied Mary, " canst thou expect that I should accept thy devotions offered to me with so defiled a soul?" On hearing this the soldier was converted, became a hermit, and lived in a desert for thirty years. At death the Blessed Virgin again appeared to him and took him herself to Heaven.

We say it is morally impossible for a client of Mary to be lost; but this must be understood on condition that he lives either without sin, or, at least, with the desire to abandon it; for then the Blessed Virgin will help him. But should any one, on the other hand, sin in the hope that Mary will save him, he thereby would render himself unworthy and incapable of her protection.

Ah, my Queen, continue to guard me from hell; for what will thy mercy and the favours thou hast shown me avail me if I am lost? If I did not always love, now at least—after God—I love thee above all things. Never allow me to turn my back on thee or on God, Who, by thy intercession, has granted me so many graces. Love me, O Mary, my hope; save me from hell. But save me first from sin which alone can condemn me to it.

II.

The second condition is perseverance in devotion to Mary : " Perseverance alone," says St. Bernard, " will merit a crown." When Thomas à Kempis was a young

man he used every day to have recourse to the Blessed Virgin with certain prayers; he one day omitted them; he then omitted them for some weeks, and finally gave them up altogether. One night he saw Mary in a dream: she embraced all his companions, but when his turn came she said: "What dost thou expect, thou who hast given up thy devotions? Depart, thou art unworthy of my caresses." On hearing this Thomas awoke in alarm, and resumed his ordinary prayers. Hence, Richard of St. Laurence with reason says that he who perseveres in his devotion to Mary will be blessed in his confidence and will obtain all he desires. But as no one can be certain of this perseverance, no one before death can be certain of salvation. The advice given by St. John Berchmans, of the Society of Jesus, deserves our particular attention. When this holy young man was dying, his companions entreated him, before he left this world, to tell them what devotion they could perform which would be most agreeable to our Blessed Lady. He replied in the following remarkable words: *Any devotion, however small, provided it is constant.* Oh, how many are now in hell who would have been saved had they only persevered in the devotions they once practised in honour of Mary!

O my Mother, in thee have I placed all my hopes; from thee do I expect every grace. Alas, miserable wretch that I am! I have hitherto fallen because I have not had recourse to thee. I now hope that, through the merits of Jesus Christ, and thy prayers, I have obtained pardon. But I may again lose Divine grace; the danger is not past; my enemies do not sleep. I know that thou wilt help me, and that with thy help I shall conquer if I recommend myself to thee: but this is what I fear, that in time of danger I may neglect to call upon thee and thus be lost. I ask thee, then, for this grace, that in the assaults of hell I may always have recourse to thee by saying: O Mary help me! my Mother, permit me not to lose my God!

Spiritual Reading.

VITA, DULCEDO! HAIL, OUR LIFE, OUR SWEETNESS!

XIX.—MARY IS OUR LIFE, BECAUSE SHE OBTAINS FOR US THE PARDON OF OUR SINS.

We read in the Gospel of St. Luke that Mary said, *Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed*—(Luke i. 48). "Yes, my Lady," exclaims St. Bernard, "all generations shall call thee blessed, for thou hast begotten life and glory for all generations of men." For this cause all men shall call thee blessed, for all thy servants obtain through thee the life of grace and eternal glory. "In thee do sinners find pardon, and the just perseverance and eternal life." "Distrust not, O sinner," says the devout Bernardine de Bustis, "even if thou hast committed all possible sins: go with confidence to this most glorious Lady, and thou wilt find her hands filled with mercy and bounty." Because, he adds, "she desires more to do thee good than thou canst desire to receive favours from her."

St. Andrew of Crete calls Mary the pledge of Divine mercy; meaning that when sinners have recourse to Mary that they may be reconciled with God, He assures them of pardon and gives them a pledge of it; and this pledge is Mary, whom He has bestowed upon us for our advocate, and through whose prayers, by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, God forgives all who have recourse to her. St. Bridget heard an Angel say that the holy Prophets rejoiced in knowing that God, by the humility and purity of Mary, was to be reconciled with sinners and to receive those who had offended Him to favour. "They exulted, foreknowing that our Lord Himself would be appeased by thy humility and the purity of thy life, O Mary, thou supereffulgent star, and that He would be reconciled with those who had provoked His wrath."

No sinner, having recourse to the compassion of Mary, should fear being rejected; for she is the Mother of Mercy

and as such desires to save the most miserable. Mary is that happy ark, says St. Bernard, "in which those who take refuge will never suffer the shipwreck of eternal perdition." At the time of the deluge even brutes were saved in Noe's Ark. Under the mantle of Mary even sinners obtain salvation. St. Gertrude once saw Mary with her mantle extended and under it many wild beasts—lions, bears, and tigers—had taken refuge. And she remarked that Mary not only did not reject but even welcomed and caressed them with the greatest tenderness. The Saint understood hereby that the most abandoned sinners who have recourse to Mary are not only not rejected, but that they are welcomed and saved by her from eternal death. Let us, then, enter this ark, let us take refuge under the mantle of Mary, and she most certainly will not reject us, but will secure our salvation.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XXV.—"CHARITY IS PATIENT."—THE SOUL THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST LOVES TO SUFFER.

I.

Let us be convinced that in this valley of tears true peace of heart cannot be found except by him who endures and lovingly embraces sufferings to please Almighty God: this is the consequence of that corruption in which all are placed through the infection of sin. The condition of the Saints on earth is to suffer and to love; the condition of the Saints in Heaven is to enjoy and to love. Father Paul Segneri the Younger, in a letter which he wrote one of his penitents to encourage her to suffer, gave her the counsel to keep these words inscribed at the foot of her Crucifix: *'Tis thus one loves!* It is not simply by suffering but by desiring to suffer for the love of Jesus Christ that a soul gives the surest signs of really loving Him. And what greater acquisition, said St. Teresa, can we possibly make than to have some

token of gratifying Almighty God? Alas, how ready are most men to take alarm at the bare mention of crosses, of humiliations, and afflictions! Nevertheless there are many souls who find all their delight in suffering, and who would be quite disconsolate did they pass their time on this earth without suffering. The sight of Jesus crucified, said a devout person, renders the cross so lovely to me that it seems to me I could never be happy without suffering; the love of Jesus Christ is sufficient for me in all circumstances. Jesus advises every one who would follow Him to take up and carry his cross: *Let him take up his cross and follow me*—(Luke ix. 23). But we must take it up and carry it, not by constraint and against our will, but with humility, patience, and love.

II.

Oh, how acceptable to God is he that humbly and patiently embraces the crosses He sends him! St. Ignatius of Loyola said: "There is no wood so apt to enkindle and maintain love towards God as the wood of the cross"; that is, to love Him in the midst of sufferings. One day St. Gertrude asked our Lord what she could offer Him most acceptable, and He replied: "My child, thou canst do nothing more gratifying to Me than to submit patiently to all the tribulations that befall thee." Wherefore the great servant of God, Sister Victoria Angelini, affirmed that one day of crucifixion was worth a hundred years of all other spiritual exercises. And the Blessed John of Avila said: "One Blessed be God! in ill success is worth more than a thousand thanksgivings in prosperity." Alas, how little men know of the inestimable value of affliction endured for God! The Blessed Angela of Foligno said that "if we knew the just value of suffering for God, it would become an object of plunder"; which is as much as to say that each one would seek an opportunity of robbing his neighbour of the occasions of suffering. For this reason St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, well aware as she was of the merit of sufferings, sighed to have her life prolonged rather than to die and go to Heaven, "because," said she, "in Heaven one can suffer no more."

Fourth Sunday after Easter

Morning Meditation.

"BE SLOW TO ANGER."
(Epistle of Sunday. James i. 17, 21).

St. Jerome says that anger is the door by which all vices enter the soul. Let us implore God to preserve us from yielding to any strong passion, and particularly to anger. For he that submits to such a passion is exposed to great danger of falling into grievous sin against God or his neighbour. Let us look on Jesus Crucified and we shall not dare to complain.

I.

St. Jerome says that anger is the door by which all vices enter the soul. According to St. Bonaventure, an angry man is incapable of distinguishing between what is right and what is wrong. *The anger of man worketh not the justice of God*—(James i. 20). He that submits to such a passion is exposed to great danger of falling into grievous sin against God, or his neighbour. Thus, when we receive an insult, we must do violence to ourselves and restrain our anger. Let us either answer with meekness or let us remain silent; and thus, as St. Isidore says, we shall conquer. But, if you answer through passion, you will do harm to yourselves and others. It would be still worse to give an angry answer to a person who corrects you. St. Bernard says that some are not angry though they ought to be indignant with those who wound their souls by flattery; but they are filled with indignation against the person who corrects them in order to heal their irregularities. Against the man who abhors correction, the sentence of perdition has, according to the Wise Man, been pronounced. *Because they have des-*

pised all my reproofs . . . the prosperity of fools shall destroy them—(Prov. i. 30, 32). Fools regard as prosperity to be free from correction, or to despise the admonitions they receive; but such prosperity is the cause of their ruin. When you meet with an occasion of anger you must be on your guard not to allow anger to enter your heart. *Be not quickly angry*—(Eccles. vii. 10). Some persons change colour and get into a passion, at every contradiction : and when anger has got admission, no one knows to what it shall lead them. Hence it is necessary to foresee these occasions in our meditations and prayers; for, unless we are prepared for them it will be as difficult to restrain anger as to put a bridle on a runaway horse. If, however, we have the great misfortune to permit anger to enter the soul, let us be careful not to allow it to remain. Jesus Christ tells all who remember that a brother is offended with them not to offer the gift which they bring to the altar without being first reconciled to their neighbour. *Go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift*—(Matth. v. 24). And he who has received any offence should endeavour to root out of his heart not only all anger but also every feeling of bitterness towards the persons who have offended him. *Let all bitterness*, says St. Paul, *and anger and indignation . . . be put away from you*—(Ephes. iv. 31). As long as anger continues, follow the advice of Seneca : " When you shall be angry do nothing, say nothing which may be dictated by anger." Like David, be silent, and do not speak when you feel that you are disturbed. *I was troubled, and I spoke not*—(Ps. lxxvi. 5). How many, when inflamed with anger, say and do what they afterwards in their calmer moments regret.

II.

It is necessary, of course, to remember that it is not possible for human weakness, in the midst of so many occasions, to be altogether free from every motion of anger. No one, as Seneca says, can be entirely exempt from this passion. All our efforts must be directed to the moderation of the feelings of anger which spring up

in the soul. How are they to be moderated? By meekness. This is called the virtue of the lamb—that is, the beloved virtue of Jesus Christ. Because like a lamb, without anger or even complaint, He bore the sorrows of His Passion and Crucifixion. *He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth*—(Is. liii. 7). Hence He taught us to learn of Him meekness and humility of heart. *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart*——(Matth. xi. 29).

Oh, how pleasing in the sight of God are the meek, who submit in peace to all crosses, misfortunes, persecutions, and injuries! To the meek is promised the Kingdom of Heaven. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land*—(Matth. v. 4). They are called the children of God. *Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God*—(Matth. v. 9). Some boast of their meekness but without any grounds; for they are meek only towards those who praise and confer favours upon them, but to those who injure or censure them they are all fury and vengeance. The virtue of meekness consists in being meek and peaceful towards those who hate and maltreat us. *With them that hated peace I was peaceful*—(Ps. cxix. 6).

We must, as St. Paul says, put on the bowels of mercy towards all men, and bear one with another. *Put ye on the bowels of mercy, humility, modesty, patience, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another*—Col. iii. 12). You wish others to bear with your defects, and to pardon your faults; you should act in the same manner towards them. Whenever, then, you receive an insult from a person enraged against you, *remember that a mild answer breaketh wrath*—(Prov. xv. 1). A certain monk once passed through a cornfield: the owner of the field ran out and spoke to him in very offensive and injurious language. The monk humbly replied: Brother, you are right; I have done wrong; pardon me. By this answer the husbandman was so much appeased that he instantly became calm, and even wished to follow the monk and enter into Religion. The proud make use of the humili-

ations they receive to increase their pride; but the humble and the meek turn the contempt and insults offered to them into an occasion of advancing in humility. "He," says St. Bernard, "is humble who converts humiliation into humility."

"A man of meekness," says St. John Chrysostom, "is useful to himself and to others." The meek are useful to themselves because, according to Father Alvarez, the time of humiliation and contempt is for them the time of merit. Hence Jesus Christ calls His disciples happy when they shall be reviled and persecuted. *Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and and persecute you*—(Matth. v. 11). Hence the Saints have always desired to be despised as Jesus Christ was despised. The meek are useful to others, because, as the same St. John Chrysostom says, there is nothing better calculated to draw others to God than to see a Christian meek and cheerful when he receives an injury or an insult. The reason is because virtue is known by being tried; and, as gold is tried by fire, so the meekness of men is proved by humiliation. *Gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation*—(Ecclus. ii. 5).

Spiritual Reading.

VITA, DULCEDO! HAIL, OUR LIFE, OUR SWEETNESS!

XX.—MARY IS OUR LIFE, BECAUSE SHE OBTAINS FOR US PERSEVERANCE.

Final perseverance is so great a gift of God that, as was declared by the Holy Council of Trent, it is quite gratuitous on God's part, and we cannot *merit* it. Yet we are told by St. Augustine that all who seek for it obtain it from God; and, according to Father Suarez, they obtain it infallibly, if only they are diligent in asking for it to the end of their lives. For, as Blessed

Bellarmine well remarks, "that which is daily required must be asked for every day." Now, if it is true (and I hold it as certain, according to the now generally received opinion) that all the graces God dispenses to men pass through the hands of Mary, it will be equally true that it is only through Mary that we can hope for this greatest of all graces—perseverance. And we shall obtain it most certainly, if we always seek it with confidence through Mary. This grace she herself promises to all who serve her faithfully during life, in the following words of Ecclesiasticus, and which are applied to her by the Church on the Feast of her Immaculate Conception: *They that work by me shall not sin. They that explain me shall have life everlasting*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 30).

In order that we may be preserved in the life of grace, we require spiritual fortitude to resist the many enemies of our salvation. Now this fortitude can be obtained only by means of Mary, and we are assured of it in the Book of Proverbs, for the Church applies the passage to this most Blessed Virgin. *Strength is mine; by me kings reign*—(Prov. viii. 14); meaning by the words *strength is mine* that God has bestowed this precious gift on Mary in order that she may dispense it to her faithful clients. And by the words *By me kings reign* she signifies that by her means her servants reign over and command their senses and passions, and thus become worthy to reign eternally in Heaven. Oh, what strength do the servants of this great Lady possess to overcome all the assaults of hell! Mary is that tower spoken of in the sacred Canticles: *Thy neck is as the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks; a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armour of valiant men*—(Cant. iv. 4). She is as a well defended fortress in defence of her lovers who, in their wars, have recourse to her. In her do her clients find all shields and arms to defend themselves against hell.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XXVI.—"CHARITY IS PATIENT."—THE SOUL THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST LOVES TO SUFFER.

I.

A soul that loves God has no other end in view than to be wholly united with Him; but let us learn from St. Catherine of Genoa what is necessary to be done to arrive at this perfect union: "To attain union with God, adversities are indispensable," she says, "because by them God aims at destroying all our corrupt propensities within and without. And hence all injuries, contempt, infirmities, abandonment by relations and friends, confusion, temptations, and other mortifications—all are in the highest degree necessary for us in order that we may carry on the fight until by repeated victories we come to extinguish within us all vicious movements, so that they are no longer felt; and we shall never arrive at Divine union until adversities, instead of seeming bitter to us, become all sweet for God's sake."

II.

It follows, then, that a soul that sincerely desires to belong to God must be resolved, as St. John of the Cross writes, not to seek enjoyments in this life, but to suffer in all things; she must embrace with eagerness all voluntary mortifications, and with still greater eagerness those which are involuntary, since they are the more welcome to Almighty God: "The patient man is better than the valiant." God is pleased with a person who practises mortification by fasting, *cilices*, and disciplines, on account of the courage displayed in such mortifications; but He is much more pleased with those who have the courage to bear patiently and gladly such crosses as come from His own Divine hand. St. Francis de Sales said "Such mortifications as come to us from the hand o

God, or from men by His permission, are always more precious than those which are the offspring of our own will; for it is a general rule that wherever there is less of our own choice, God is better pleased, and we ourselves derive greater profit." St. Teresa taught the same thing: "We gain more in one day by the oppositions which come to us from God or from our neighbour than by ten years of mortification self-inflicted."

Monday—Fourth Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

"THE WILL OF GOD, YOUR SANCTIFICATION."

In seeking eternal salvation we must, as St. Paul tells us, never rest, but run continually in the way of perfection so that we may win the prize and secure an incorruptible crown. *So run that you may obtain*—(1 Cor. ix. 24). If we fail, the fault will be all our own, for God wills that all should be holy and perfect. *This is the will of God—your sanctification*—(1 Thess. iv. 3).

I.

This is the will of God—your sanctification. As it is impossible to arrive at perfection in any art or science without ardent desires of its attainment, so no one has ever yet become a Saint but by strong and fervent aspirations after sanctity. "God," observes St. Teresa, "ordinarily confers His special favours on those only who thirst after His love." *Blessed*, says the royal Prophet, *is the man whose help is from thee: in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps in the vale of tears,*

They shall go from virtue to virtue—(Ps. lxxxiii. 6, 7, 8). Happy the man who has resolved in his soul to mount the ladder of perfection : he shall receive abundant aid from God, and will ascend from virtue to virtue. Such has been the practice of the Saints, and especially of St. Andrew Avellino, who even bound himself by vow "to advance continually in the way of Christian perfection." St. Teresa used to say that "God rewards, even in this life, every good desire." It was by good desires that the Saints arrived in a short time at a sublime degree of sanctity. *Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time*—(Wisd. iv. 13). It was thus that St. Aloysius, who lived but twenty-five years, acquired such perfection that St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, who saw him in bliss, declared that his glory appeared equal to that of most of the Saints. In the vision he said to her : My eminent sanctity was the fruit of an ardent desire which I cherished during my life of loving God as much as He deserved to be loved : and, being unable to love Him with that infinite love which He merits, I suffered on earth a continual martyrdom of love, for which I am now raised to that transcendent glory which I enjoy.

"Our thoughts," says St. Teresa, "should be aspiring : from great desires all our good will come." In another place she says : "We must not lower our desires, but should trust in God that by continual exertion we shall, by His grace, arrive at the sanctity and felicity of the Saints." Again she says : "The Divine Majesty takes complacency in generous souls who are diffident in themselves." This great Saint asserted that in all her experience she never knew a timid Christian to attain as much virtue in many years as certain courageous souls acquired in a few days. The reading of the Lives of the Saints contributes greatly to infuse courage into the soul.

It will be particularly useful to read the Lives of those who, after being great sinners, became eminent Saints, such as St. Mary Magdalen, St. Augustine, St. Pelagia, St. Mary of Egypt, and especially St. Margaret of Cortona, who was for many years in a state of damnation, but even then cherished a desire of sanctity; and

who, after her conversion, flew to perfection with such rapidity that she merited to learn by revelation, even in this life, not only that she was predestined to glory, but also that a place was reserved for her among the Seraphim.

O Divine Heart of my Jesus! Heart enamoured of men! Heart created to love them! How is it possible that Thou hast been so much dishonoured and despised by them? Unhappy me! I, too, have been one of those ungrateful souls; I, too, have lived so many years in the world and have not loved Thee. Pardon me, O my Jesus, the crime of not having loved Thee, Who art so amiable, and Who hast loved me so much that Thou couldst not have done more than Thou hast done to oblige me to love Thee. In punishment of having so long despised Thy love I would deserve to be condemned to that miserable state in which I could never love Thee. But no, my Jesus; I cheerfully accept every chastisement except the eternal privation of Thy love. Grant me the grace to love Thee, and then dispose of me as Thou pleasest.

II.

St. Teresa says that the devil seeks to persuade us that it would be pride in us to desire a high degree of perfection, or to wish to imitate the Saints. She adds that it is a great delusion to regard strong desires of sanctity as the offspring of pride; for it is not pride in a soul diffident of herself and trusting only in the power of God to resolve to walk courageously in the way of perfection, saying with the Apostle: *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me*—(Phil. iv. 13). Of myself I can do nothing; but by God's aid I shall be able to do all things; and therefore I resolve, with His grace, to desire to love Him as the Saints have loved Him.

It is very profitable frequently to aspire after the most exalted virtue, and to desire it—such as to love God more than all the Saints, to suffer for the love of God more than all the Martyrs, to bear and to pardon all injuries, to embrace every sort of fatigue and suffering for the sake of saving a single soul, and to perform similar acts

of perfect charity. Because these holy aspirations and desires, though their object will never be attained, are, in the first place, very meritorious in the sight of God, Who glories in men of good will as He abominates a perverse heart and evil inclinations. Secondly, because the habit of aspiring to heroic sanctity animates and encourages the soul to perform acts of ordinary and easy virtue. Hence it is of great importance to propose in the morning to labour as much as possible for God during the day; to resolve to bear patiently all crosses and contradictions; to observe constant recollection; and to make continual acts of the love of God. Such was the practice of the seraphic St. Francis. "He proposed," says St. Bonaventure, "with the grace of Jesus Christ to do great things." St. Teresa asserts that "the Lord is as well pleased with good desires as with their fulfilment." Oh, how much better is it to serve God than to serve the world! To acquire goods of the earth, to procure wealth, honours, and applause of men, it is not enough to pant after them with ardour; no, to desire and not to obtain them only renders their absence more painful. But to merit the riches and the favour of God, it is sufficient to desire His grace and love.

O my Jesus, Thou sayest: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart*—(Matt. xxii. 37). It is Thy will, then, that I love Thee with my whole soul, and I desire nothing but to love Thee with all my strength. O loving Heart of my Jesus, light up in my soul that blessed fire which Thou camest on earth to enkindle. Destroy all the earthly attachments that still live in my heart, and prevent me from belonging entirely to Thee. O my beloved Saviour, do not reject the love of a heart which has hitherto so much afflicted Thee. Ah, since Thou hast loved me so much, do not permit me to live for a single moment without Thy love! O love of my Jesus, Thou art my love! I hope that I shall always love Thee, and that Thou wilt always love me; and that this mutual love shall never be dissolved.

O Mary, Mother of fair love, O thou who dost desire to see thy Son loved, bind and unite me to Jesus, so that I may become entirely His, as He desires me to be.

Spiritual Reading.

VITA, DULCEDO! HAIL, OUR LIFE, OUR SWEETNESS!

XXI.—MARY IS OUR LIFE, BECAUSE SHE OBTAINS FOR US PERSEVERANCE.

The most Blessed Virgin is called a plane-tree in the words of Ecclesiasticus : *As a plane-tree by the water in the streets was I exalted*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 19). Cardinal Hugo explains them, and says that the "plane-tree has leaves like shields," to show how Mary defends all who take refuge with her. Blessed Amedeus gives another explanation, and says that this holy Virgin is called a plane-tree because, as the plane-tree shelters travellers under its branches from the heat of the sun and from the rain, so do men find refuge under the mantle of Mary from the ardour of their passions and from the fury of temptations. Truly are those souls to be pitied who abandon this defence in ceasing their devotion to Mary, and no longer recommending themselves to her in time of danger. If the sun ceased to rise, says St. Bernard, how could the world become other than a chaos of darkness and horror? And applying his question to Mary he repeats it : "Take away the sun and where will be the day? Take away Mary, and what will be left but the darkest night?" When a soul loses devotion to Mary, it is immediately enveloped in darkness, and in that darkness of which the Holy Ghost speaks in the Psalms : *Thou has appointed darkness, and it is night; in it shall all the beasts of the woods go about*—(Ps. ciii. 20). When the light of Heaven ceases to shine in a soul, all is darkness, and it becomes the haunt of devils and of every sin. St. Anselm says that "if any one is disregarded and condemned by Mary, he is necessarily lost," and therefore we may with reason exclaim, "Woe to those who are in opposition to this sun!" Woe to those who despise its light! That is to say, all who despise devotion to Mary.

St. Francis Borgia always doubted the perseverance of those in whom he did not find particular devotion to the Blessed Virgin. On one occasion he questioned some novices as to the Saints towards whom they had special devotion, and perceiving some who had it not towards Mary, he instantly warned the Master of novices and desired him to keep a more attentive watch over these unfortunate young men, who all, as he had feared, lost their vocation and renounced the Religious state.

It was, then, not without reason that St. Germanus called the most Blessed Virgin the "breath of Christians"; for as the body cannot live without breathing, so the soul cannot live without having recourse to and recommending itself to Mary, by whose means we certainly acquire and preserve the life of divine grace within our souls. But I will quote the Saint's own words: "As breathing is not only a sign but even a cause of life, so the name of Mary, which is constantly found on the lips of God's servants, both proves that they are truly alive, and at the same time causes and preserves their life, and gives them every succour."

Blessed Allan was one day assaulted by a violent temptation and was on the point of yielding, for he had not recommended himself to Mary, when the most Blessed Virgin appeared to him and, in order that another time he might remember to invoke her aid, she gave him a blow, saying: "If thou hadst recommended thyself to me thou wouldst not have run into such danger."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XXVII.—"CHARITY IS KIND"—HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST LOVES MEEKNESS.

I.

St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi made the generous declaration that there could not be found in the whole world an affliction so severe that she would not gladly bear when

she thought that it came from God; and, in fact, during the five years of severe trial which the Saint underwent, it was enough to restore peace to her soul to remember that is was by the will of God that she so suffered. Ah, God, that infinite treasure is cheaply purchased at any cost! Father Hippolytus Durazzo used to say: "Purchase God at what cost you will; He can never be dear."

O my most loving Redeemer, enable me to know how great a Good Thou art, and how great is the love Thou hast borne me in order to oblige me to love Thee! Ah, my God, suffer me not to live any longer unmindful of so much goodness! Enough have I offended Thee, I will never leave Thee again; I wish to employ all the remainder of my days in loving Thee, and in pleasing Thee. My Jesus, my Love, lend me Thine aid; help a sinner who wishes to love Thee and to be wholly Thine. O Mary, my hope, thy Son hears thee; pray to Him in my behalf, and obtain for me grace of loving Him perfectly!

II.

Let us then beseech God to make us worthy of His love; for if we did but once perfectly love Him, all the goods of this earth would seem to us but as smoke and dirt, and we should relish ignominies and afflictions as delights. Let us hear what St. John Chrysostom says of a soul wholly given up to Almighty God: "He who has attained the perfect love of God seems to be alone on the earth—he no longer cares for either glory or ignominy—he scorns temptations and afflictions—he loses all relish and appetite for created things. And as nothing in this world brings him any support or repose, he goes incessantly in search of his Beloved without ever feeling wearied; so that when he toils, when he eats, when he is watching, or sleeping, in every action and every word all his thoughts and desires are fixed upon finding his Beloved, because his heart is where his treasure is."

My dear and beloved Jesus, my Treasure, I have deserved by my offences never more to be allowed to love Thee; but by Thy merits, I entreat Thee, make me worthy of Thy pure love. I love Thee above all things;

and I repent with my whole heart of having ever despised Thee, and driven Thee from my soul; but now I love Thee more than myself; I love Thee with all my heart, O Infinite Good! I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee, and I have not a wish besides that of loving Thee perfectly; nor have I a fear besides that of ever seeing myself deprived of Thy love.

Tuesday—Fourth Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

TO BECOME HOLY A SOUL MUST GIVE ITSELF UNRESERVEDLY TO GOD.

St. Jerome says God is jealous of our hearts. He desires to reign alone in our hearts and to have no companions there. There are souls called by God to become Saints, but coming to Him with reserve, and not giving Him their entire love but retaining some affection for earthly things, they will never become holy. To gain all we must give all.

I.

St. Philip Neri said that so much of our love as we fix upon creatures we take away from God; and therefore our Saviour, as St. Jerome wrote, is jealous of our hearts. As He Himself has loved us so abundantly He desires to reign alone in our hearts, and to have no companions there who may rob Him of a portion of that love which He desires to have wholly for Himself; and therefore it displeases Him to see us attached to any affection which is not for Him. And does our Saviour ask too much, after having given His own Blood and Life, dying for us

upon a Cross? Does He not deserve to be loved by us with all our hearts, and without reserve.

St. John of the Cross said that every attachment to creatures hinders us from belonging wholly to God. *Who will give me the wings of a dove, that I may flee away and be at rest?* says the Psalmist—(Ps. liv. 7). There are souls called by God to become Saints, but, coming to Him with reserve and not giving Him their whole love but retaining some affection for earthly things, they will never become holy. They fain would fly, but being held down by some attachment, they cannot but remain fixed on earth. We must, therefore, strip ourselves of everything. Every thread, says the same St. John, whether great or small, hinders the soul from flying to God.

St. Gertrude once prayed to the Lord that He would teach her what He would have her to do. The Lord answered: I desire nothing from thee but a devoted heart. And it was this which David sought from God: *Create in me a clean heart, O God!*—(Ps. l. 12). O my God, give me a pure heart; a heart emptied and stripped of every earthly affection.

"All for all," wrote Thomas à Kempis. To gain all, we must give all. To possess God we must leave all that is not God. Then the soul can say to the Lord: "My Jesus, I have left all for Thee; now give Thyself wholly to me." To attain this we must not cease to beg of God that He would fill us with His holy love. Love is that mighty fire that burns up in our hearts every affection that is not for God.

O my Jesus, my Love, my All! How can I see Thee dying upon a shameful Cross, despised by all, and consumed by anguish, and then seek earthly pleasures and glories? I will be wholly Thine. Forget the offences I have committed against Thee, and receive me. Teach me to know from what things I ought to separate myself, and what I must do to please Thee—all this I desire to do. Give me strength to follow Thy will, and to be faithful to Thee.

II.

St. Francis de Sales said that when a house is in flames we throw all the furniture out of the windows; by which

he meant that when a soul is inflamed and the Divine love takes possession of it, it has no need of sermons or spiritual directors to detach it from the world; the love of God will itself cleanse the heart and despoil it of every earthly desire.

Holy love is spoken of in the Canticles under the symbol of a cellar of wine: *He brought me into the cellar of wine; he set in order charity in me*—(Cant. ii. 4). In this blessed cellar souls that are the brides of Christ, inebriated with the wine of holy love, lose all taste for the things of the world, admire God alone, in all things seek God alone, speak only of God, and desire to think only of God; and when they hear others speak of riches, dignities, pleasures, they turn to God and say to Him, with a burning sigh: *My God and my All!* What of the world, or pleasures, or honours? Be Thou all my joy, all my contentment! St. Teresa wrote, when speaking of the prayer of union with God, that this union consists in dying to all worldly things in order to possess nothing but God.

That a soul may give itself wholly to God, three things are especially necessary: First, the avoidance of all defects, even the very least, accompanied with conquests over our inordinate desires, such as to abstain from observing such and such an object of sight or hearing, from certain little pleasures of sense, from certain witty or unnecessary conversations, and such-like. Secondly, among things which are good the constant choice of those that are the best and the most pleasing to God. Thirdly, the receiving with peace of mind and thanksgiving from the Divine hands, things displeasing to our self-love.

Oh, my beloved Redeemer, Thou willest that I should give myself to Thee without reserve, that I may unite myself wholly to Thy Heart. Behold, this day I give myself wholly, and without reserve, to Thee, my Jesus; from Thee I hope for the grace to be faithful even to death. O Mother of God, and my own Mother, Mary, obtain for me the grace of holy perseverance.

Spiritual Reading.

VITA, DULCEDO! HAIL, OUR LIFE, OUR SWEETNESS!

XXII.—MARY IS OUR LIFE, BECAUSE SHE OBTAINS FOR US PERSEVERANCE.

In the following words of the Book of Proverbs, which are applied to her by the Church, Mary says: *Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors*—(Prov. viii. 34)—as if she would say: Blessed is he that hears my voice and is constantly attentive to apply at the door of my mercy, and seeks light and help from me. For clients who do this Mary does her part, and obtains them the light and strength they require to abandon sin and walk in the paths of virtue. For this reason Innocent III beautifully calls her "the moon at night, the dawn at break of day, and the sun at mid-day." She is a moon to enlighten those who blindly wander in the night of sin, and makes them see and understand the miserable state of damnation in which they are; she is the dawn, that is the forerunner of the sun, to those whom she has already enlightened, and makes them abandon sin and return to God, the true Sun of Justice; finally, she is a sun to those who are in a state of grace, and prevents them from again falling into the abyss of sin.

Learned writers apply the following words of Ecclesiasticus to Mary: *Her bands are a healthful binding*—(Ecclus. vi. 31). "Why bands?" asks St. Laurence Justinian, "except it be that she binds her servants and thus prevents them from straying into the paths of vice." And truly this is the reason for which Mary binds her servants. St. Bonaventure also, in his commentary on the words of Ecclesiasticus frequently used in the Office of Mary, *My abode is in the full assembly of saints*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 16), says that Mary not only has her abode in the full assembly of Saints, but also preserves them from falling, keeps a constant watch over

their virtue that it may not fail, and restrains the evil spirits from injuring them. Not only has she her abode in the full assembly of Saints, but she keeps the Saints there by preserving their merits that they may not lose them, by restraining the devils from injuring them, and by withholding the arm of her Son from striking sinners.

In the Book of Proverbs we are told that all Mary's clients are clothed with double garments. *For all her domestics are clothed with double garments*—(Prov. xxxi. 21). Cornelius à Lapide explains what this double clothing is. He says that it "consists in her adorning her faithful servants with the virtues of her Son and with her own"; and thus clothed they persevere in virtue.

Therefore St. Philip Neri, in his exhortations to penitents, used always to say: "My children, if you desire perseverance be devout to our Blessed Lady." St. John Berchmans, of the Society of Jesus, used also to say: "Whoever loves Mary will have perseverance." Truly beautiful is the reflection of the Abbot Rupert on this subject in his commentary on the Parable of the Prodigal Son. He says that, "if this dissolute youth had had a mother living he would never have abandoned the paternal roof, or at least would have returned much sooner than he did"; meaning thereby that a son of Mary either never abandons God, or, if he has this misfortune, by her help he soon returns.

Oh, did all men but love this most benign and loving Lady, had they but recourse to her always and without delay in their temptations, who would fall? Who would ever be lost? He falls and is lost who has not recourse to Mary. St. Laurence Justinian applies to Mary the words of Ecclesiasticus: *I have walked in the waves of the sea*—(Eccius. xxiv. 8), and makes her say: "I walk with my servants in the midst of the tempests to which they are constantly exposed, to assist and preserve them from falling into sin."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XXVIII.—"CHARITY IS KIND"—HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST LOVES MEEKNESS

I.

The spirit of meekness is peculiar to God: *My spirit is sweet above honey*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 27). Hence it is that a soul that loves God loves also all those God loves, namely, her neighbours; so that she eagerly seeks every occasion of helping all, of consoling all, and of making all happy as far as she can. St. Francis de Sales, who was the master and model of holy meekness, says: "Humble meekness is the virtue of virtues which God has so much recommended to us; therefore we should endeavour to practise it always and in all things." Hence the Saint gives us this rule: *What you see can be done with love, do it; and what you see cannot be done without offence, leave it undone.* He means, when it can be omitted without offending God; because an offence of God must always, and as quickly as possible, be prevented by him who is bound to prevent it.

This meekness should be particularly observed towards the poor, who, by reason of their poverty, are often harshly treated by men. It should likewise be especially practised towards the sick who are suffering under infirmities, and, for the most part, meet with small help from others. Meekness is more especially to be observed in our behaviour towards our enemies: *Overcome evil with good*—(Rom. xii. 21). Hatred must be overcome by love, and persecution by meekness; thus the Saints acted, and so they conciliated the affections of their most exasperated enemies.

II.

"There is nothing," says St. Francis de Sales, "that gives so much edification to our neighbour as meekness

of behaviour." The Saint, therefore, was generally seen smiling and with a countenance beaming with charity, which gave a tone to all his words and actions. This gave occasion to St. Vincent de Paul to declare that he never knew a kinder man in his life. He said, further, that it seemed to him that in this his lordship of Sales was a true likeness of Jesus Christ. Even in refusing what he could not in conscience give, he did so with such sweetness that all, though unsuccessful in their requests, went away satisfied and well-disposed towards him. He was gentle towards all, towards superiors, towards equals and inferiors, at home and abroad; in contrast with some, who, as the Saint used to say, *seemed angels abroad, but were devils at home.* Moreover, the Saint, in his conduct towards servants, never complained of their remissness; at most he would give them an admonition, but always in the gentlest terms. And this is a thing most praiseworthy in superiors. The superior should use all kindness towards those under him. When telling them what they have to do, he should request rather than command. St. Vincent de Paul said: "A superior will never find a better means of being readily obeyed than meekness." And to the same effect was the saying of St. Jane Frances de Chantal: "I have tried various methods of governing, but I have not found any better than that of meekness and forbearance."

Wednesday—Fourth Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

"BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT."

The maxims of the world are altogether opposed to those of the Gospel. Thus worldlings put their trust in

riches, whilst the Saints of God look upon poverty as their greatest treasure. It is not certain the rich are lost, but the Redeemer Himself has declared : *It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven*—(Matt. xix. 24).

I.

To the young man who asked what he should do in order to attain perfection Jesus said : *If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor* —(Matt. xix. 21). The Saviour told him that he should renounce all his possessions without a single exception. For when, as St. Bonaventure says, the spirit is encumbered with the weight of any temporal possessions, the soul cannot rise to union with God. "Burdened with the load of temporal things, the spirit cannot ascend to God." "The love of terrestrial objects," according to St. Augustine, "is the birdlime of the spiritual wings," which impedes the flight of the soul to God. And again the holy Doctor says : "By the great wing of poverty a Christian flies quickly to Heaven." Hence St. Laurence Justinian exclaimed : "O blessed voluntary poverty, possessing nothing, fearing nothing, always cheerful, always abounding, because it turns to advantage every inconvenience."

It was for our edification and instruction that Jesus Christ wished to live in continual poverty on earth. Hence St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi called poverty the spouse of Jesus. "Poverty," says St. Bernard, "was not found in Heaven—it abounded on earth; but man did not know its value : therefore the Son of God, longing after it, came down from Heaven to choose it for Himself, and make it precious to us." *Being rich*, says St. Paul, *he became poor for your sakes, that through his poverty you might be rich*—(2 Cor. viii. 9). Our Redeemer was the Lord of all the riches in Heaven and on earth, but He wished to be miserably poor in this life in order to enrich us and to excite us by His example to the love of poverty which, by withdrawing our affections from temporal goods, procures for us eternal riches. He

wished to be poor during His whole life. Poor in His Birth—He was born, not in a palace but in a cold stable having only a manger for His cradle and straw for His bed. Poor in His life and poor in all things He dwelt in a miserable cabin containing but a single room which served for all the purposes of life. Poor in His garments and in His food. St. John Chrysostom says that the Redeemer and His disciples ate nothing but barley-bread; and this may be inferred from the Gospel (John vi. 9). Poor, in fine, in His death: leaving nothing behind Him but His miserable garments; and these, even before His death, were divided among the soldiers. Thus for His winding-sheet and sepulchre He depended on the bounty of the charitable.

O my Jesus, in Thee I find all things: out of Thee I desire nothing. Ah, draw me entirely to Thyself; enkindle in my heart Thy holy love alone, by which I desire to be entirely consumed. Deliver me, O Lord, from all affections that separate me from Thee.

II.

Jesus once said to Blessed Angela de Foligno: "If poverty were not a great blessing I should not have chosen it for Myself, nor should I have left it as an inheritance to My elect." It was because they saw Jesus poor that the Saints loved poverty so much. Father Louis of Granada and Blessed John of Avila discussed one day the reason why St. Francis of Assisi had such an affection for poverty. Father Louis maintained that it was because the Saint wished to be freed from every impediment to a perfect union with God. But Blessed John of Avila asserted with more truth that the ardent love of St. Francis for holy poverty arose from his ardent love of Jesus Christ. And surely a soul that loves Jesus Christ intensely cannot but exclaim with the Apostle: *I count all things as dung, that I may gain Christ*—(Phil. iii. 8). I esteem all the goods of the earth as dung, and therefore I despise them all, that I may gain Jesus Christ. Hence St. Francis de Sales used to say that when a house is on fire the furniture is thrown

out of the windows; and, long before, the Holy Ghost said: *If a man should give all the substance of his house for love he shall despise it as nothing*—(Cant. viii. 7). The ardent lover cheerfully despises all things through the love He bears to God.

My dear Redeemer, I know Thou hast been calling me for so many years because Thou dost wish me to belong to Thee entirely. Since, then, Thou dost so ardently desire my welfare, grant that henceforth I may seek only Thy love and the fulfilment of Thy will. Amen.

Spiritual Reading.

VITA, DULCEDO! HAIL, OUR LIFE, OUR SWEETNESS!

XXIII.—MARY IS OUR LIFE BECAUSE SHE OBTAINS FOR US PERSEVERANCE.

We, says St. Thomas of Villanova, when tempted by the devil need only imitate little chickens which, as soon as they perceive the approach of a bird of prey, run under the wings of their mother for protection. This is exactly what we should do whenever we are assaulted by temptation: we should not stay to reason with it, but immediately fly and place ourselves under the mantle of Mary. I will, however, quote the Saint's own words addressed to Mary: "As chickens when they see a kite soaring above run and find refuge under the wings of the hen, so are we preserved under the shadow of thy wings." "And thou," he continues, "who art our Lady and Mother, hast to defend us; for, after God, we have no other refuge than thee, who art our only hope and our protectress; towards thee we all turn our eyes with confidence."

Let us then conclude in the words of St. Bernard: "O man, whoever thou art, understand that in this world thou art tossed about on a stormy and tempestuous

sea, rather than walking on solid ground; remember that if thou wouldst avoid being drowned thou must never turn thine eyes from the brightness of this star, but keep them fixed on it and call on Mary. In dangers, in straits, in doubts, think of Mary, invoke Mary." Yes, in dangers of sinning, when molested by temptations, when doubtful as to how you should act, remember that Mary can help you and call upon her, and she will instantly succour you. "Let not her name leave thy lips, let it be ever in thy heart." Your hearts should never lose confidence in her holy name nor should your lips ever cease to invoke it. "Following her thou wilt certainly not go astray." Oh, no; if we follow Mary we shall never err from the paths of salvation. "Imploring her, thou wilt not despair." Each time that we invoke her aid we shall be inspired with perfect confidence. "If she supports thee thou canst not fall; if she protects thee thou hast nothing to fear, for thou canst not be lost; with her for thy guide thou wilt not be weary, for thy salvation will be worked out with ease. If she is propitious thou wilt reach the port." If Mary undertakes our defence we are certain of gaining the kingdom of Heaven. *This do and thou shalt live*—(Luke x. 28).

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XXIX.—"CHARITY IS KIND"—HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST LOVES MEEKNESS

I.

And more than this, the superior should be kind even in the correction of faults. It is one thing to correct with *firmness*, and another with *harshness*. It is needful at times to correct with firmness, when the fault is serious, and especially if it be repeated after the subject has already been admonished of it; but let us always be on our guard against harsh and angry correction; he that

corrects with anger does more harm than good. This is that bitter zeal reproved by St. James. Some make a boast of keeping their family in order by severity, and they say it is the only successful method of treatment; but St. James speaks not so : *But if you have bitter zeal . . . glory not*—(James iii. 14). If on some rare occasion it be necessary to speak a cross word in order to bring the offender to a proper sense of his fault, yet in the end we ought invariably to leave him with a gentle countenance and a word of kindness. Wounds must be healed after the fashion of the good Samaritan in the Gospel, with wine and oil. " But as oil," said St. Francis de Sales, "always swims on the surface of all other liquids, so must meekness prevail over all our actions." And when it occurs that the person under correction is agitated, then the reprehension must be deferred till his anger has subsided, or else we should only increase his indignation. The Canon Regular St. John said : " When the house is on fire, one must not cast wood into the flames."

II.

You know not of what spirit you are—(Luke ix. 55). Such were the words of Jesus Christ to His disciples James and John, when they would bring down chastisements on the Samaritans for expelling them from their country. Ah, said the Lord to them, and what spirit is this? This is not My spirit, which is sweet and gentle; for I am come not to destroy but to save souls : *The Son of man came not to destroy souls, but to save*—(Luke ix. 56). And would you induce Me to destroy them? Oh, be silent, and never make the like request to Me, for such is not according to My spirit. And, in fact, with what meekness did Jesus Christ treat the adulteress! *Woman*, said He, *hath no man condemned thee? Neither will I condemn thee! Go, and now sin no more*—(John viii. 10, 11). He was satisfied with merely warning her not to sin again, and sent her away in peace. With what meekness, again, did He seek the conversion of the Samaritan woman, and so, in fact, converted her! He first asked her to give Him to drink; then He said to

her : *If thou didst know who he is that saith to thee: Give me to drink!*—and then He revealed to her that He was the expected Messiah. And again, with what meekness did he strive to convert the impious Judas, admitting him to eat from the same dish with Him, washing his feet and admonishing him in the very act of His betrayal : *Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?*—(Luke xxii. 48). And see how He converted Peter after his denial of Him ! *And the Lord turning, looked on Peter*—(Luke xxii. 61). On leaving the house of the high-priest, without making him a single reproach, He cast on him a look of tenderness, and thus converted him; and so effectually did He convert him that, during his whole life long, Peter never ceased to bewail the injury he had done to His Master.

Thursday—Fourth Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

"BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT."

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. O happy commerce ! We renounce the goods of this earth, which are but mire, and we receive in exchange the graces of God and eternal rewards more precious than the purest gold.

I.

From the Sacred Scriptures we learn that the reward of poverty is most certain, and great beyond measure.

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It is most certain, because Jesus Christ has said: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*—(Matt. v. 3). To the other Beatitudes, Heaven is promised only as a future reward. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land*—(Matt. v. 4). *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God*—(Matt. v. 8). But to the *poor in spirit* God's kingdom is promised as a present recompense: *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Because, to those that are truly poor in spirit the Lord gives very great helps, even in this life. Hence Cornelius à Lapide says that since, by the decree of God, the kingdom of Heaven belongs to the poor, they have a full right to it. The reward of poverty is very secure, and great beyond conception. "The less we have here," says St. Teresa, "the more we shall enjoy in God's kingdom, in which the mansion of each is proportioned to the love with which we shall have imitated the life of Jesus Christ." "O happy commerce," exclaims St. Peter Damian, "where clay is given away and gold received." O happy traffic! We renounce the goods of earth, which are but mire, and we receive in exchange the graces of God and eternal rewards more precious than the purest gold.

O my Jesus, if hitherto my heart has been attached to the goods of this world, Thou henceforth shall be my only Treasure. O God of my soul, Thou art a Good infinitely greater than any other good, and dost deserve infinite love. I esteem and love Thee, therefore, above all things, and even more than myself. Thou art the only object of my affections. I desire nothing in this world. If I had my desire, it would be to possess all the treasures and kingdoms of this world for the purpose of renouncing them all and depriving myself of them for the love of Thee. Come, O my Love, come and consume in me every affection that is not for Thee.

II.

The poor in spirit shall also have the honour of sitting with Jesus Christ as the judges of the world. *Behold,* says St. Peter to Jesus, *we have left all things and have followed thee: what, therefore, shall we have? And Jesus*

said to them: Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of his majesty, you shall also sit on twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel—(Matt. xix. 27, 28). God has promised eternal glory hereafter, and a hundredfold in this life, to all who abandon earthly goods for His sake. *And every one that hath left house . . . or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting*—(Matt. xix. 29). This promise is fulfilled in all the poor in spirit who, because they desire nothing on earth, possess all riches: *As having nothing and possessing all things*—(2 Cor. vi. 10). The Redeemer has justly compared riches to thorns—(Matt. xiii. 22), for in proportion to their abundance riches torment the soul by cares, by fears, and by the desire of increased possessions. Hence St. Bernard says that while the avaricious, because their desire of riches is never satiated, like mendicants, thirst after the goods of this world the poor in spirit, because they wish for nothing upon earth, despise Mammon. "The avaricious man, like a mendicant, hungers after earthly things; the poor man, like a prince, contemns them." Oh, how great is the happiness of him who desires and possesses nothing upon earth! He enjoys true peace—a blessing more valuable than all worldly goods, which can never content a soul destined to be made happy only by the possession of God.

O my God, grant that in future I may regard only Thee, think only of Thee, and sigh after Thee alone! The love that made Thee die on the Cross for me, makes me die to all my inclinations and desire only Thy holy grace and love. My dear Redeemer, when shall I be entirely Thine as Thou art mine? Oh, take me and make me live only for Thy glory. Trusting in the merits of Thy Blood, O my Jesus, and in thy intercession, O my Mother Mary, I hope for all things.

Spiritual Reading.

VITA, DULCEDO! HAIL, OUR LIFE, OUR SWEETNESS!

XXIV.—MARY IS OUR SWEETNESS; SHE RENDERS DEATH SWEET TO HER CLIENTS.

He that is a friend loveth at all times; and a brother is proved in distress—(Prov. xvii. 17), says the Book of Proverbs. We can never know our friends in the time of prosperity; it is only in the time of adversity that we see them in their true colours. People of the world never abandon a friend as long as he is in prosperity; but should misfortunes overtake him, and more particularly should he be at the point of death, they immediately forsake him. Mary does not act thus with her clients. In their afflictions, and more particularly in the sorrows of death, the greatest that can be endured in this world, this good Lady and Mother not only does not abandon her faithful servants, but, as during our exile she is our life, so also is she at our last hour our sweetness, by obtaining for us a calm and happy death. For from the day on which Mary had the privilege and sorrow of being present at the death of Jesus, her Son, Who was the Head of all the predestined, it became her privilege also to assist at their deaths. And for this reason the holy Church teaches us to beg this most blessed Virgin to assist us, especially at the moment of death : *Pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death!*

Oh, how great are the sufferings of the dying! They suffer from remorse of conscience on account of past sins, from fear of the approaching judgment, and from the uncertainty of their eternal salvation. Then it is that hell arms itself and spares no efforts to gain the soul which is on the point of entering eternity; for it knows that only a short time remains in which to gain it, and that, if hell then loses it, it loses it for ever. *The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time*—(Apoc. xii. 12). And for

this reason the enemy of our salvation, whose charge it was to tempt the soul during life, does not choose at death to be alone, but calls others to his assistance, according to the Prophet Isaias : *Their houses shall be filled with serpents*—(Is. xiii. 21). And indeed they are so; for when a person is at the point of death the whole place in which he is is filled with devils who all unite to make him lose his soul.

It is related of St. Andrew Avellino that ten thousand devils came to tempt him at his death. The conflict that he had in his agony with the powers of hell was so terrible that all the good Religious who assisted him trembled. They saw the Saint's face swelled to such a degree from agitation that it became quite black, every limb trembled and was contorted; his eyes shed a torrent of tears; his head shook violently; all gave evidence of the terrible assault he was enduring on the part of his infernal foes. All wept with compassion and redoubled their prayers, and at the same time trembled with fear on seeing a Saint die thus. They were, however, consoled at seeing that often, as if seeking for help, the Saint turned his eyes towards a devout picture of Mary, for they remembered that during life he had often said that at death Mary would be his refuge. At length God was pleased to put an end to the contest by granting him a glorious victory; for the contortions of his body ceased, his face resumed its original size and colour, and the Saint, with his eyes tranquilly fixed on the picture, made a devout inclination to Mary (who it is believed then appeared to him) as if in the act of thanking her, and with a heavenly smile on his countenance tranquilly breathed forth his blessed soul into the arms of Mary. At the same moment a Capuchin nun, who was in her agony, turning to the nuns who surrounded her, said : "Recite a 'Hail Mary,' for a Saint has just expired."

Ah, how quickly do the rebellious spirits fly from the presence of this Queen! If at the hour of death we have only the protection of Mary, what need we fear from all our infernal enemies? David, fearing the horrors of death, encouraged himself by placing his reliance on the death of the coming Redeemer and on the intercession of

the Virgin Mother. *For though*, he says, *I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, . . . thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me*—(Ps. xxii. 4). Cardinal Hugo, explaining these words of the royal Prophet, says that the staff signifies the Cross, and the rod is the intercession of Mary; for she is the rod foretold by the Prophet Isaias: *And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root*—(Is. xi. 1). "This Divine Mother," says St. Peter Damian, "is that powerful rod with which the violence of the infernal enemies is conquered." And therefore does St. Antoninus encourage us, saying: "If Mary is for us, who shall be against us?"

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XXX.—"CHARITY IS KIND"—HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST LOVES MEEKNESS.

I.

Oh, how much more is to be gained by meekness than by harshness! St. Francis de Sales said there was nothing more bitter than the bitter almond; but if made into a preserve it becomes sweet and agreeable: thus corrections, though of their nature very unpleasant, are rendered pleasant by love and meekness, and so are attended with more beneficial results. St. Vincent de Paul said of himself that in the government of his own Congregation he had never corrected any one with severity, except on three occasions, when he supposed there was reason to do so; but that he regretted it ever afterwards because he found it turned out badly; whereas he had always admirably succeeded by gentle correction.

St. Francis de Sales obtained from others whatever he wished by his meek behaviour; and by this means he managed to gain the most hardened sinners to God. It was the same with St. Vincent de Paul, who taught his disciples this maxim: "Affability, love, and humility

have a wonderful efficacy in winning the hearts of men, and in prevailing on them to undertake things most repugnant to nature." He once gave a great sinner to the care of one of his fathers to bring him to sentiments of true repentance; but the father, in spite of all his endeavours, found his labour fruitless, so that he begged the Saint to speak a word to him. The Saint accordingly spoke with him, and converted him. That sinner subsequently declared that the singular sweetness of Father Vincent had worked upon his heart. Therefore it was that the Saint could not bear his missionaries to treat sinners with severity; and he told them that the infernal spirit took advantage of the strictness of some to work the greater ruin of souls.

Kindness should be observed towards all on all occasions and at all times. St. Bernard remarks that certain persons are gentle as long as things fall out to their taste; but scarcely do they experience some opposition or contradiction than they are instantly on fire, like Mount Vesuvius itself. Such as these may be called burning coals, but hidden under the ashes. Whoever would become a Saint must, during this life, resemble the lily among thorns, which, however much it may be pricked by them, never ceases to be a lily; that is, it is always equally sweet and serene. The soul that loves God maintains an imperturbable peace of heart; and she shows this in her very countenance, being ever mistress of herself, alike in prosperity and adversity, according to the lines of Cardinal Petrucci:

"Of outward things he views the varying guise,
While in his soul's most inmost depth
Undimmed God's image lies."

Adversity brings out a person's real character. St. Francis de Sales very tenderly loved the Order of the Visitation, which had cost him so much labour. He saw it several times in imminent danger of dissolution, on account of the persecutions it underwent; but the Saint never for a moment lost his peace, and was ready, if such was the will of God, to see it entirely destroyed; and then it was that he said: "For some time past the trying

oppositions and secret contrarieties which have befallen me afford me so sweet a peace that nothing can equal it; and they give me such an earnest of the immediate union of my soul with God that, in truth, they form the sole desire of my heart."

O my Jesus, I, too, abandon myself to Thee. I love Thee with my whole heart; I love Thee more than myself. I have offended Thee in times past; but now I bitterly repent of it, and I would willingly die of grief. Oh, draw me entirely to Thyself! I renounce all sensible consolations; I wish for Thee alone, and nothing more. Make me love Thee, and then do with me what Thou wilt. O Mary, my hope, bind me to Jesus; and grant me to live and die in union with Him, in order to come one day to the happy kingdom, where I shall have no more fear of ever being separated from His love!

II.

Whenever it happens that we have to reply to some one who insults us, let us be careful to answer with meekness: *A mild answer breaketh wrath*—(Prov. xv. 1). A mild reply is enough to quench every spark of anger. And in case we feel irritated it is best to keep silence, because then it seems only just to give vent to all that rises to our lips; but when our passion has subsided, we shall see that all our words were full of faults.

And when it happens that we ourselves commit some fault we must also practise meekness in our own regard: to be exasperated at ourselves after a fault is not humility but a subtle pride, as if we were anything else but the weak and miserable things that we are. St. Teresa said: "The humility that disturbs does not come from God, but from the devil. To be angry with ourselves after the commission of a fault is a fault worse than the one committed, and will be the occasion of many other faults: it will make us leave off our devotions, prayers, and communions; or if we do practise them they will be done very badly. St. Aloysius Gonzaga said that we cannot see in troubled waters, and that the devil fishes in them. A soul that is troubled knows little of God and of what she ought to do. Whenever, therefore,

we fall into any fault, we should turn to God with humility and confidence, and, craving His forgiveness, say to Him, with St. Catherine of Genoa : ' O Lord, this is the produce of my own garden ! I love Thee with my whole heart, and I repent of the displeasure I have given Thee ! I will never do the like again ; grant me Thy assistance !' "

O blessed chains that bind the soul to God, enfold me still closer, and in links so firm that I may never be able to loosen myself from the love of my God ! My Jesus, I love Thee ! O Treasure, O Life of my soul, to Thee I cling, and I give myself wholly unto Thee ! No, indeed, my beloved Lord, I wish never more to cease from loving Thee. Thou Who, to atone for my sins, didst allow Thyself to be bound as a criminal, and so bound to be led to death through the streets of Jerusalem —Thou Who didst consent to be nailed to the Cross, and didst not leave it until life itself had left Thee—oh, suffer me not ever to be separated from Thee again ; I regret above every other evil to have at one time turned my back upon Thee, and henceforth I purpose by Thy grace to die rather than to give Thee the slightest displeasure.

Friday—Fourth Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

"IN ALL THINGS YOU ARE MADE RICH IN HIM."

The Wounds of Jesus are now the blessed Fountains from which we can draw forth all graces if we pray unto Him with Faith. *You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains, and you shall say in that day : Praise ye the Lord, and call upon his name*—(Is. xii. 3,

4). In short, as St. Paul says : *In all things you are made rich in him . . . so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace*—(1 Cor. i. 5, 7).

1.

Having, therefore, a great High-Priest who hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high-priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin—(Heb. iv. 14). Since, says the Apostle, we have this Saviour, Who has opened to us Paradise which was at one time closed to us by sin, let us always have confidence in His merits; because from having of His goodness willed to suffer in Himself all our miseries, He well knows how to compassionate us : *Let us, therefore, go with confidence to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid*—(Heb. iv. 16). Let us, then, go with confidence to the throne of the Divine mercy, to which we have access by means of Jesus Christ, that so we may there find all the graces that we need. And how can we doubt, adds St. Paul, but that God, having given us His Son, has given us together with that Son all His goods : *He delivered him up for us all; how hath he not, with him, given us all things?*—(Rom. viii. 32). Cardinal Hugo comments on this : " He will give the lesser, that is to say, eternal life, Who hath given the greater, that is to say, His own Son." That Lord will not deny us the lesser, which is eternal life, Who has gone so far as to give us the greater, which is His own Son Himself.

O my chief and only Good, what shall I render Thee, miserable as I am, in return for so great a gift as that which Thou hast given me of Thy Son? To Thee will I, with David say : *The Lord will repay for me*—(Ps. cxxxvii. 8). Lord, I have not wherewith to recompense Thee. That same Son of Thine can alone render Thee worthy thanks; let Him thank Thee in my stead. O my most merciful Father, by the Wounds of Jesus, I pray Thee to save me. I love Thee, O infinite Goodness, and because I love Thee I repent of having offended

Thee. My God, my God, I wish to be all Thine own; accept me for the sake of the love of Jesus Christ. Ah, my sweet Creator, is it possible that Thou, after having given me Thy Son, shouldst deny me the good things that belong to Thee—Thy grace, Thy love, Thy Paradise?

II.

St. Leo declares that Jesus Christ, by His Death, has brought us more good than the devil brought us evil in the sin of Adam: "We have gained greater things through the grace of Christ than we had lost through the envy of the devil." And this the Apostle distinctly says, when writing to the Romans: *Not as the offence so also the gift . . . Where sin abounded, grace did more abound*—(Rom. v. 15, 20). Cardinal Hugo explains it: "The grace of Christ is of greater efficacy than is the offence." There is no comparison, says the Apostle, between the sins of man and the gift which God has made us in giving us Jesus Christ; great was the sin of Adam, much greater by far was the grace which Jesus Christ, by His Passion, merited for us: *I have come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly*—(John x. 10). I am come into the world, the Saviour protests, to the end that men who were dead through sin may receive through Me not only the life of grace, but a life yet more abundant than that which they had lost by sin. Therefore it is that Holy Church calls the sin happy which has merited to have such a Redeemer: "O felix culpa, quæ talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!"

Behold, God is my Saviour, I will deal confidently, and will not fear—(Is. xii. 2). If, then, O my Jesus, Thou, Who art an Omnipotent God, art also my Saviour, what fear shall I have of being damned? If, in time past, I offended Thee, I repent of it with all my heart. From this time forth I wish to serve Thee, to obey Thee, and to love Thee. I firmly hope that Thou, my Redeemer, Who hast done and suffered so much for my salvation, wilt not deny me any grace that I shall need in order to be saved: "I will act with confidence, firmly hoping

that nothing necessary to salvation will be denied me by Him Who has done and suffered so much for my salvation."

Spiritual Reading.

VITA, DULCEDO! HAIL, OUR LIFE, OUR SWEETNESS!

XXV.—MARY IS OUR SWEETNESS; SHE RENDERS DEATH SWEET TO HER CLIENTS.

When Father Emmanuel Padial, of the Society of Jesus, was at the point of death Mary appeared to him, and to console him she said: "See at length the hour is come when the Angels congratulate thee, and exclaim: 'O happy labours, O mortifications well requited!'" And in the same moment an army of demons was seen taking flight, and crying out in despair: Alas! we can do nought, for she who is without stain defends him. In like manner Father Gaspar Haywood was assaulted by devils at his death and greatly tempted against the Faith; he immediately recommended himself to the most Blessed Virgin, and was heard to exclaim: "I thank thee, Mary, for thou hast come to my aid."

St. Bonaventure tells us that Mary sends without delay the Prince of the heavenly court, St. Michael, with all the Angels, to defend her dying servants against the temptations of the devils, and to receive the souls of all who, in a special manner and perseveringly, have recommended themselves to her. The Saint, addressing our blessed Lady, says: "Michael, the leader and Prince of the heavenly army, with all the ministering spirits, obeys thy commands, O Virgin, and defends and receives the souls of the faithful who day and night have particularly recommended themselves to thee, O Lady." The Prophet Isaias tells us that when a man is on the point of leaving the world, hell is opened and sends forth most terrible demons, both to tempt the soul before it leaves the body and also to accuse it when presented

before the tribunal of Jesus Christ for judgment. The Prophet says : *Hell below was in an uproar to meet thee at thy coming ; it stirred up the giants for thee*—(Is. xiv. 9). But Richard of St. Laurence remarks that when the soul is defended by Mary the devils dare not even accuse it, knowing that the Judge never condemned, and never will condemn, a soul protected by His august Mother. He asks : " Who would dare accuse one who is patronized by the Mother of Him Who is to judge?" Mary not only assists her beloved servants at death and encourages them, but she herself accompanies them to the judgment-seat of God.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XXXI.—" CHARITY ENVIETH NOT "—HE THAT LOVES JESUS DOES NOT ENVY THE GREAT ONES OF THE WORLD, BUT ONLY THOSE WHO ARE GREATER LOVERS OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

St. Gregory explains this next characteristic of Charity in saying that, as Charity despises all earthly greatness, nothing in the world can possibly provoke her envy. " She envieth not, because as she desireth nothing in this world, she cannot envy earthly prosperity." We must distinguish two kinds of envy, one evil and the other holy. The evil kind is that which envies and repines at the worldly goods possessed by others on this earth. But holy envy, so far from wishing to be like, rather compassionates the great ones of the world who live in the midst of honours and earthly pleasures. She seeks and desires God alone, and has no other aim beside that of loving Him as much as she can ; and therefore she has a pious envy of those who love Him more than she does, for she would, if possible, surpass the very seraphim in loving Him.

II.

This is the sole end pious souls have in view on earth, an end which so charms and ravishes the Heart of God

ith love that it causes Him to say : *Thou hast wounded ıy heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded my eart with one of thy eyes*—(Cant. iv. 9). By *one of hy eyes* is meant that one end which the espoused soul as in all her devotions and thoughts, namely, to please lmighty God. Men of the world look on things with ıany eyes, that is, have several inordinate views in their ctions; as, for instance, to please others, to become onoured, to obtain riches, and, if nothing else, at least o please themselves; but the Saints have but a single ye, with which they keep in view, in all that they do, he sole pleasure of God; and with David they say : *Vhat have I in heaven, and besides thee what do I desire pon earth?*—(Ps. lxxii. 25). What do I wish, my God, in this world or in the next, save Thee alone? 'hou art my riches, Thou art the only Lord of my heart. Let the rich," said St. Paulinus, " enjoy their riches, et the kings enjoy their kingdoms, Thou, O Christ, art ıy treasure and my kingdom !"

Saturday—Fourth Week after Easter

Morning Meditation.

AVE, MARIA, GRATIA PLENA!
HAIL, MARY, FULL OF GRACE!

This Angelical Salutation is most pleasing to the ever-lessed Virgin, for whenever she hears it, it would seem

as if the joy she experienced when St. Gabriel announced to her that she was the chosen Mother of God was renewed in her. For this reason we should often salute her : *Ave Maria, gratia plena—Hail Mary, full of Grace!*

I.

This Angelical Salutation is most pleasing to the ever-blessed Virgin; for, whenever she hears it, it would seem as if the joy she experienced when St. Gabriel announced to her that she was the chosen Mother of God, was renewed in her; and with this object in view we should often salute her with the "Hail Mary." "Frequently salute her," says Thomas á Kempis, "with the angelical salutation; for she indeed hears this sound with pleasure." The Divine Mother herself told St. Matilda that no one could salute her in a manner more agreeable to her than with the "Hail Mary."

He who salutes Mary will also be saluted by her. St. Bernard once heard the Blessed Virgin salute him, saying : *Ave, Bernarde!*—Hail, Bernard! Mary's salutation, says St. Bonaventure, will always be some grace corresponding to the wants of him who salutes her : "She willingly salutes us with grace if we willingly salute her with a 'Hail Mary.'" Richard of St. Laurence adds that "if we address the Mother of our Lord, saying, 'Hail Mary,' she cannot refuse the grace which we ask." Mary herself promised St. Gertrude as many graces at death as she should have said "Hail Marys." Blessed Alan says that "as all Heaven rejoices when the 'Hail Mary' is said, so also the devils tremble and take to flight." This Thomas á Kempis affirms on his own experience; for he says that once the devil appeared to him, and instantly fled on hearing the "Hail Mary."

We can every morning and evening on rising and going to bed say three "Hail Marys" prostrate, or at least kneeling; and add to each "Hail Mary" this short prayer : *O Mary, by thy pure and immaculate conception, make my body pure and my soul holy.* We should then, as St. Stanislaus always did, ask Mary's blessing as our Mother; place ourselves under the mantle of her protection, beseeching her to guard us during the coming day or night from sin. For this purpose it is advisable

to have a beautiful picture or image of the Blessed Virgin.

We can say the *Angelus* with the usual three "Hail Marys" in the morning, at mid-day, and in the evening. Pope John XXII was the first to grant an indulgence for this devotion; it was on the following occasion, as Father Crasset relates. A criminal was condemned to be burned alive on the Vigil of the Annunciation of the Mother of God; he saluted her with a "Hail Mary," and in the midst of the flames he, and even his clothes, remained uninjured. In 1724 Benedict XIII granted a hundred days' indulgence to all who recite it, and a plenary indulgence once a month to those who, during that time, have recited it daily as above, on condition of their going to Confession and receiving Holy Communion, and praying for the usual intentions. Formerly, at the sound of the bell, all knelt down to say the *Angelus*, but in the present day there are some who are ashamed to do so. St. Charles Borromeo was not ashamed to leave his carriage or get off his horse to say the *Angelus* in the street, and even sometimes in the mud.

O immaculate and holy Virgin! O creature the most humble and the most exalted before God! Thou wast so lowly in thine own eyes, but so great in the eyes of thy Lord that He exalted thee to such a degree as to choose thee for His Mother, and make thee Queen of Heaven and earth. I therefore thank God Who so greatly exalted thee, and rejoice in seeing thee so closely united with Him that a greater gift cannot be granted to a pure creature. Before thee, who art so lowly, though endowed with so precious gifts, I am ashamed to appear, I who am so proud in the midst of so many sins. But, miserable as I am, I will also salute thee, *Hail, Mary, full of grace!* Thou art already full of grace; impart a portion of it to me. *The Lord is with thee.* That Lord Who was always with thee from the first moment of thy creation has now united Himself more closely to thee by becoming thy Son. *Blessed art thou amongst women.* O Lady, blessed amongst all women, obtain the Divine blessing for us also. *And blessed is the fruit of thy*

womb. Oh, blessed plant which hath given to the world so noble and holy a fruit!

II.

We can salute the Mother of God with a "Hail Mary" every time we hear the clock strike. St. Alphonsus Rodriguez saluted her every hour; and at night Angels awoke him that he might not omit his devotion.

In going out and returning to the house we can salute the Blessed Virgin with a "Hail Mary," that both at home and abroad she may guard us from all sin; and we should each time kiss her feet, as the Carthusian Fathers always do.

We should reverence every image of Mary which we pass with a "Hail Mary." For this purpose those who can do so would do well to place a beautiful image of the Blessed Virgin on the wall of their houses, that it may be venerated by those who pass. In Naples, and still more in Rome, there are most beautiful images of our Blessed Lady placed along the wayside by her devout clients.

By command of the holy Church all the canonical hours are preceded by a "Hail Mary," and concluded with it; we therefore do well to begin and end all our actions with a "Hail Mary." I say all our actions, whether spiritual, such as Prayer, Confession, and Communion, Spiritual Reading, hearing sermons, and the like; or temporal, such as study, giving advice, working, going to table, to bed, etc. Happy are those actions that are enclosed between two "Hail Marys." So also should we do on waking in the morning, on closing our eyes to sleep, in every temptation, in every danger, in every inclination to anger, and the like; on these occasions we should always say a "Hail Mary."

Do this, and you will see the immense advantage that you will derive from it. Remember also that for every "Hail Mary" there is an Indulgence of thirty days. Father Auriemma relates that Blessed Virgin promised St. Matilda a happy death if she every day recited three "Hail Marys" in honour of her power, wisdom, and goodness. Moreover, she herself told St. Jane Frances

de Chantal that the "Hail Mary" was most acceptable to her, and especially when recited ten times in honour of her ten virtues.

Holy Mary, Mother of God! O Mary, I acknowledge that thou art the true Mother of God, and in defence of this truth I am ready to give my life a thousand times. *Pray for us sinners.* But if thou art the Mother of God, thou art also the Mother of our salvation, and Mother of us poor sinners; since God became Man to save sinners, and made thee His Mother that thy prayers might have the power to save any sinner. Hasten, then, O Mary, and pray for us, *now, and at the hour of our death.* Pray always: pray now that we live in the midst of so many temptations and dangers of losing God; but still more, pray for us at the hour of our death, when we are on the point of leaving this world and being presented before God's tribunal, that, being saved by the merits of Jesus Christ and by thy intercession, we may come one day, without further danger of being lost, to salute thee and praise thee with thy Son in Heaven for all eternity. Amen.

Spiritual Reading.

VITA, DULCEDO! HAIL, OUR LIFE, OUR SWEETNESS!

XXVI.—MARY IS OUR SWEETNESS; SHE RENDERS DEATH SWEET TO HER CLIENTS.

As St. Jerome says, writing to the virgin Eustochia: "What a day of joy will that be for thee when Mary, the Mother of our Lord, accompanied by choirs and virgins, will go to meet thee!" The Blessed Virgin assured St. Bridget of this; for, speaking of her devout clients at the point of death, she said: "Then will I, their dear Lady and Mother, fly to them, that they may have consolation and refreshment." St. Vincent Ferrer says that not only does the most Blessed Virgin console and refresh them, but that she receives the

souls of the dying. This loving Queen takes them under her mantle and thus presents them to the Judge, her Son, and most certainly obtains their salvation. This really happened to Charles, the son of St. Bridget, who died in the army far from his mother. She feared much for his salvation on account of the dangers to which young men are exposed in a military career; but the Blessed Virgin revealed to her that he was saved on account of his love for her and that, in consequence, she herself had assisted him at death and had suggested to him the acts that should be made at that terrible moment. At the same time the Saint saw Jesus on His throne and the devil bringing two accusations against the most Blessed Virgin: the first was that Mary had prevented him from tempting Charles at the moment of death; and the second was that this Blessed Virgin had herself presented his soul to the Judge, and so saved it without even giving him the opportunity of exposing the grounds on which he claimed it. She then saw the Judge drive the devil away, and Charles' soul carried to Heaven.

Ecclesiasticus says that *her bands are a healthful binding*—(Ecclus. vi. 31), and that *in the latter end thou shalt find rest in her*—(Ecclus. vi. 29). Oh, you are indeed fortunate if at death you are bound with the sweet chains of the love of the Mother of God! These chains are chains of salvation; they are chains that will insure your eternal salvation, and will make you enjoy in death that blessed peace which will be the beginning of your eternal peace and rest. Father Binetti, in his book on the *Perfection of Our Blessed Lord*, says that, having attended at the death-bed of a great lover of Mary, he heard him, before expiring, utter these words: "O my Father, would that you could know the happiness that I now enjoy from having served the most holy Mother of God; I cannot tell you the joy that I now experience." Father Suarez (in consequence of his devotion to Mary which was such that he used to say that he would willingly exchange all his learning for the merit of a single "Hail Mary") died with such peace and joy that in that moment he said: "I could not have

thought that death was so sweet"; meaning that he could never have imagined that it was possible, if he had not then experienced it, that he could have found such sweetness in death.

You will, without doubt, experience the same joy and contentment in death if you can then remember that you have loved this good Mother who cannot be otherwise than faithful to her children who have been faithful in serving and honouring her by their Visits, Rosaries, and Fasts, and still more by frequently thanking and praising her, and often recommending themselves to her powerful protection. Nor will this consolation be withheld even if you have been for a time a sinner provided that, from this day, you are careful to live well and to serve this most gracious and benign Lady. In your pains and in the temptations to despair which the devil will send you, she will console you, and even come herself to assist you in your last moments. St. Peter Damian relates that his brother Martin had one day offended God grievously. Martin went before an altar of Mary to dedicate himself to her as her slave; and for this purpose, and as a mark of servitude, put his girdle round his neck, and thus addressed her: "My sovereign Lady, mirror of that purity which I, miserable sinner that I am, have violated, thereby outraging my God and thee, I know no better remedy for my crime than to offer myself to thee for thy slave. Behold me then: to thee do I this day dedicate myself, that I may be thy servant; accept me, though a rebel, and reject me not." He then left a sum of money on the step of the altar and promised to pay a like sum each year as a tribute which he owed as a slave of Mary. After a certain time Martin fell dangerously ill; but one morning, before expiring, he was heard to exclaim: "Rise, rise, pay homage to my Queen!" and then he added: "And whence is this favour, O Queen of Heaven, that thou shouldst condescend to visit thy poor servant? Bless me, O Lady, and permit me not to be lost after having honoured me with thy presence." At this moment his brother Peter entered and to him he related the visit of Mary, and added that she had blessed him, but at the same time he complained that those

who were present had remained seated in the presence of this great Queen: and shortly afterwards he sweetly expired in our Lord.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XXXII.—"CHARITY ENVIETH NOT"—HE THAT LOVES JESUS DOES NOT ENVY THE GREAT ONES OF THE WORLD, BUT ONLY THOSE WHO ARE GREATER LOVERS OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

And here we must remark that we must not only perform good works, but we must perform them well. In order that our works may be good and perfect, they must be done with the sole end of pleasing God. This was the admirable praise bestowed on Jesus Christ: *He hath done all things well*—(Mark vii. 37). Many actions may in themselves be praiseworthy, but from being performed for some purpose other than for the glory of God, they are of little or no value in His sight. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi said: "God rewards our actions by the weight of pure intention." As much as to say that according as our intention is pure, so does the Lord accept of and reward our actions. But, O God, how difficult it is to find an action done solely for Thee! I remember a holy old man, a Religious, who had laboured much in the service of God, and died with the reputation of sanctity—how one day, as he cast a glance back at his past life, he said to me in a tone of sadness and fear: "Woe is me! When I consider all the actions of my past life, I do not find one done entirely for God." Oh, this accursed self-love that makes us lose all the greater part of the fruit of our good actions! How many in their most holy employments, as of preaching, hearing confessions, giving missions, labour and exert themselves very much, and gain little or nothing, because they do not

regard God alone, but worldly honour, or self-interest, or the vanity of making an appearance, or at least their own inclination!

II.

Our Lord has said: *Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them; otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven*—(Matt. vi. 1). He that works for his own gratification already receives his wages: *Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward*—(Matt. vi. 5). But a reward indeed which dwindles into a little smoke, or the pleasure of a day that quickly vanishes, and confers no benefit on the soul. The Prophet Aggeus says that whoever labours for anything else but to please God puts his reward in a bag full of holes, which, when he comes to open, he finds entirely empty: *And he that hath earned wages, put them into a bag with holes*—(Agg. i. 6). And hence it is that such persons, in the event of their not gaining the object for which they entered on some underaking, are thrown into great trouble. This is a sign that they had not in view the glory of God alone: he that undertakes a thing solely for the glory of God is not troubled at all, though his undertakings may not be successful, for, by working with a pure intention, he has already gained his object, which was to please Almighty God.

Fifth Sunday after Easter

Morning Meditation.

"ASK AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE."
—(Gospel of Sunday. John xvi. 23—30).

The whole life of the Saints has been one of meditation and prayer; and all the graces by means of which they

have become Saints have been received by them in answer to prayer. If therefore we are to be saved and become Saints, we should ever stand at the gates of Divine mercy and beg and pray, as for an alms, all that we stand in need of. *Ask and you shall receive.*

I.

Ask and you shall receive. We are poor in all things; but if we pray we are rich in all things; for God has promised to grant the prayer of him who prays to Him. He says : *Ask and you shall receive.* What greater love can one friend show towards another than to say to him : Ask of me what you will and I will give it to you? This is what the Lord says to each one of us. God is Lord of all things. He promises to give us as much as we ask Him for; if, then, we are poor, the fault is our own, because we do not ask Him for the graces of which we stand in need. And it is on this account that mental prayer is morally necessary for all, inasmuch as when it is laid aside, while we are involved in this world's cares, we pay but little attention to the soul; but when we practise it we discover the wants of the soul, and then we pray for the corresponding graces and obtain them.

The whole life of the Saints has been one of meditation and prayer; and all the graces by means of which they have become Saints have been received by them in answer to prayer. If, therefore, we would be saved and become saints, we should ever stand at the gates of Divine Mercy to beg and pray, as for an alms, all that we stand in need of. We need humility : let us ask for it and we shall be humble. We need patience under tribulations : let us ask for it and we shall be patient. The Divine love is what we desire : let us ask for it, and we shall obtain it. *Ask and it shall be given you*—(Matt. vii. 7) is God's promise, which cannot fail. And Jesus Christ, in order to inspire us with the greater confidence in our prayers, has promised us that whatever be the graces we shall ask of the Father in His Name, for the sake of His love or His merits, the Father will give us them all : *Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name he will give it to you*

—(John xvi. 23). And in another place He says that if we ask of Him anything in His own Name and through His merits, He will grant it : *If you ask me anything in my name, that will I do*—(John xiv. 14). Yes; because it is of Faith that whatever God can do can also be done by Jesus Christ, Who is His Son.

II.

The Council of Trent teaches, in the words of St. Augustine, that, though man is not able with the aid of the grace ordinarily given to fulfil all the Commandments, still he can, by prayer, obtain the additional helps necessary for their observance. "God does not command impossibilities," says St. Augustine, "but by His precepts He admonishes you to do what you can, and to ask what you cannot do; and He assists you that you may be able to do it." To this may be added another celebrated passage of St. Augustine : "By our Faith, which teaches that God does not command impossibilities, we are admonished what to do in things that are easy, and what to ask in things that are difficult."

But why does God, Who knows our weakness, permit us to be assailed by enemies which we are not able to resist? The Lord, answers the holy Doctor, seeing the great advantages which we derive from the very fact that we have of necessity to pray to Him, permits us to be attacked by enemies more powerful than we are, that we may ask His assistance. Hence they who are conquered cannot excuse themselves by saying that they had not strength to resist the assault of the enemy; for had they asked aid from God He would have given it; and had they prayed, they would have been victorious. Therefore, if they are defeated, God will punish them. St. Bonaventure says that if a general lose a fortress in consequence of not having sought timely succour from his sovereign, he shall be branded as a traitor. Thus God regards as a traitor the Christian who, when he finds himself assailed by temptations, neglects to seek the Divine aid. *Ask*, says Jesus Christ, *and you shall receive*. Then, concludes St. Teresa, he that does not ask does not receive. This is conformable to the doctrine

of St. James: *You have not, because you ask not* —(James iv. 2). St. John Chrysostom says that prayer is a powerful weapon of defence against all enemies. "Truly prayer is a great armour." St. Ephrem writes that he who fortifies himself beforehand by prayer prevents the entrance of sin into the soul. "If you pray before you work, the passage into the soul will not be open to sin." David said the same: *Praising I will call upon the Lord, and I shall be saved from my enemies.* —(Ps. xvii. 4).

If we wish to lead a good life, and to save our souls, we must learn to pray. "He," says St. Augustine, "knows how to live well who knows how to pray well."

Spiritual Reading.

VITA, DULCEDO! HAIL, OUR LIFE, OUR SWEETNESS!

XXVII.—MARY IS OUR SWEETNESS; SHE RENDERS DEATH SWEET TO HER CLIENTS.

Such also will be your death if you are faithful to Mary. Though you may have hitherto offended God, she will procure you a sweet and happy death. And if by chance at that moment you are greatly alarmed and lose confidence at the sight of your sins, she will come and encourage you, as she did Adolphus, Count of Alsace, who abandoned the world and entered the Order of St. Francis. In the Chronicles of the Order we are told that he had a tender devotion to the Mother of God, and that when he was at the point of death his former life and the rigours of Divine justice presented themselves before his mind, and caused him to tremble at the thought of death, and fear for his eternal salvation. Scarcely had these thoughts entered his mind, when Mary, who is always active when her servants are in pain, accompanied by many Saints, presented herself before the dying man, and encouraged him with words of

the greatest tenderness, saying: "My own beloved Adolph, thou art mine, thou hast given thyself to me, and now why dost thou fear death so much?" On hearing these words the servant of Mary was instantly relieved, fear was banished from his soul, and he expired in the midst of the greatest peace and joy.

Let us, then, be of good heart, though we be sinners, and feel certain that Mary will come and assist us at death, and comfort and console us with her presence, provided only that we serve her with love during the remainder of the time that we have to be in this world. Our Queen, one day addressing St. Matilda, promised that she would assist all her clients at death, who, during their lives had faithfully served her. "I as a most tender Mother, will faithfully be present at the death of all who piously serve me, and will console and protect them." O God, what a consolation will it be at that last moment of our lives when our eternal lot has so soon to be decided, to see the Queen of Heaven assisting and consoling us with the assurance of her protection.

Besides the cases already given in which we have seen Mary assisting her dying servants, there are innumerable others recorded in different works. This favour was granted to St. Clare; to St. Felix, of the Order of Capuchins; to St. Clare of Montefalco; to St. Teresa; to St. Peter of Alcantara. But, for our common consolation, I will relate the following: Father Crasset tells us that Mary of Oignies saw the Blessed Virgin at the pillow of a devout widow of Willembroc, who was ill with a violent fever. Mary stood by her side, consoling her, and cooling her with a fan. Of St. John of God, who was tenderly devoted to Mary, it is related that he fully expected that she would visit him on his death-bed; but not seeing her arrive he was afflicted, and perhaps even complained. But when his last hour had come the divine Mother appeared, and, gently reproving him for his little confidence, addressed him in the following tender words, which may well encourage all servants of Mary: "John, it is not in me to forsake my clients at such a moment." As though she had said: "John, of what wast thou thinking? Didst thou imagine that I had abandoned

thee? And dost thou not know that I never abandon my clients at the hour of death? If I did not come sooner, it was because thy time was not come; but now that it is come, behold me here to take thee; let us go to Heaven." Shortly afterwards the Saint expired and fled to that blessed kingdom, there to thank his most loving Queen for all eternity.

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XXXIII.—"CHARITY ENVIETH NOT"—HE THAT LOVES JESUS DOES NOT ENVY THE GREAT ONES OF THE WORLD, BUT ONLY THOSE WHO ARE GREATER LOVERS OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

The following are the signs which indicate whether we work solely for God in any spiritual undertaking. 1.—If we are not disturbed at the failure of our plans, because when we see it is not God's will, neither is it any longer our will. 2.—If we rejoice at the good done by others as heartily as if we ourselves had done it. 3.—If we have no preference for one charge more than another, but willingly accept that which obedience to superiors enjoins on us. 4.—If after our actions we do not seek the thanks or approbation of others, nor are in any way affected if we be found fault with or scolded, being satisfied in having pleased God. And if when the world applauds us we are not puffed up, but meet the vainglory, which might make itself felt, with the reply of the Blessed John of Avila: "Begone! Thou comest too late, for all has been already given to God."

This is to enter into the joy of the Lord; that is, to enjoy the enjoyment of God, as is promised to His faithful servants: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*—(Matt. xxv. 23). And if it falls to our lot to do something pleasing to God, what more, asks St. John Chrysostom, can we desire?

"If thou art found worthy to perform something that pleases God, dost thou seek other recompense than this?" The greatest reward, the brightest fortune that can befall a creature is to give pleasure to his Creator.

II.

And this is what Jesus Christ looks for from a soul that loves Him: *Put me*, He says, *as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm*—(Cant. viii. 6). He desires us to place Him as a seal on our heart and on our arm: on our heart, in order that whatever we intend doing we may intend solely for the love of God; on our arm, in order that, whatever we do, all may be done to please God; so that God may be always the sole end of all our thoughts and of all our actions. St. Teresa said that he who would become a Saint must live free from every other desire than that of pleasing God; and her first daughter, the Venerable Beatrice of the Incarnation, said: "Nothing whatever could repay the slightest thing done for God." And with reason; for all things done to please God are acts of Charity which unite us with God, and obtain for us everlasting rewards.

The Rogation Days—Monday

Morning Meditation.

CONDITIONS OF PRAYER.

All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe you shall receive, and they shall come unto you—(Mark xi. 24). Many pray, but they do not obtain what they pray for, because they do not pray as they ought. *You ask*, says St. James, *and receive not, because you ask amiss*

(James iv. 3). To be heard by God we must ask with humility, confidence, and perseverance. And what prayers, O my God, wilt Thou ever hear, if Thou hearest not those which are made as Thou wishest them to be made?

I.

Let us consider the *conditions of prayer*. Many pray, but do not obtain the object of their prayers, because they do not pray as they ought. *You ask*, says St. James, *and receive not, because you ask amiss*—(James iv. 3). To pray well it is necessary, in the first place, to pray with humility. *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*—(James iv. 6). God rejects the petitions of the proud, but does not allow the humble to depart without hearing all their prayers. *The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds . . . and he will not depart till the Most High behold*—(Ecclus. xxxv. 21). This holds, even though they have been hitherto sinners. *A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*—(Ps. l. 19). Secondly, it is necessary to pray with confidence. *No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded*—(Ecclus. ii. 11). Jesus Christ has taught us to call God, in our petitions for His graces, by no other name than that of *Father*, in order to make us pray with the same confidence with which a child has recourse to a parent. He, then, who prays with confidence, obtains every grace. *All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you*—(Mark xi. 24). And who, says St. Augustine, can fear that the promises of God, Who is Truth itself, will be violated. God, says the Scripture, is not like men, who promise but do not perform, either because they intend to deceive, or because they change their minds. *God is not as man that he should lie, nor as the son of man that he should be changed. Hath he told then, and will he not do?* —(Num. xxiii. 19). And why, adds the same St. Augustine, should the Lord so earnestly exhort us to ask His graces, if He did not wish to bestow them upon us? By His promises He has bound Himself to grant us the

graces we ask of Him. "By promising," says St. Augustine, "He has made Himself a debtor."

But some will say: I am a sinner, and therefore I do not deserve to be heard. In answer St. Thomas says that the efficacy of prayer to obtain grace depends, not on our merits, but on the Divine mercy. *Every one*, says Jesus Christ, *that asketh receiveth*—(Matt. vii. 8); that is, every one whether he be a just man or a sinner. But the Redeemer Himself takes away all fear when He says: *Amen, amen, I say to you: If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you*—(John xvi. 23). As if He said: Sinners, if you are without merits, I have merits before My Father. Ask, then, in My Name, and I promise that you will receive whatsoever you ask. But it is necessary to know that this promise does not extend to temporal favours, such as health, goods of fortune, and the like; for God often justly refuses these graces, because He sees that they would be injurious to our salvation. "The physician," says St. Augustine, "knows better than the patient what is useful." The holy Doctor adds that God refuses to some through mercy what He gives to others because He is angry. Hence we should ask temporal blessings only on condition that they will be profitable to the soul. But spiritual graces, such as pardon of sins, perseverance, Divine love, and the like, should be asked absolutely, and with a firm confidence of obtaining them. *If*, says Jesus Christ, *you being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask him!*—(Luke xi. 13).

Without Thy help, O my beloved Redeemer, I can do nothing. But Thou hast promised to grant all that we ask of Thee. Confiding, therefore, in Thy promises, my dear Jesus, I ask for the pardon of all my sins: I ask for holy perseverance; but above all, I ask for the gift of Thy holy love.

II.

Above all, *perseverance in prayer* is necessary. In his commentary on Chapter XI. of St. Luke's Gospel, Cornelius à Lapide says that the Lord "wishes us to perse-

vere in prayer even to importunity." This may be inferred from the following passages of Scripture : *We ought always to pray*—(Luke xviii. 1). *Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times*—(Luke xxi. 36). *Pray without ceasing*—(1 Thess. v. 17). It may be also inferred from our Lord's repeated exhortations to prayer. *Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you*—(Luke xi. 9). It might be sufficient to have said : *Ask*; but no; the Lord wishes us to understand that we ought to imitate beggars, who do not cease to *ask*, to *entreat*, and to *knock at the door*, until they receive an alms. But final perseverance, in particular, is a grace which is not obtained without continual prayer. We cannot merit this grace of perseverance; but, according to St. Augustine, it may be merited in a certain manner. "This gift," says the holy Doctor, "can be suppliantly merited; that is, it may be obtained by supplication." Let us, then, if we wish to be saved, pray always, and never cease to pray. And let all confessors and teachers, if they desire the salvation of souls, never cease to exhort their penitents or hearers to prayer. And, in conformity with the advice of St. Bernard, let us always have recourse to the intercession of Mary. "Let us ask for grace, and let us ask it through Mary : for what she asks she obtains, and her prayer cannot be fruitless."

O my God, I hope Thou hast already pardoned me; but my enemies will not cease to fight against me till death. Unless Thou dost assist me, I shall lose Thee again. Ah! through the merits of Jesus Christ, I ask holy perseverance. Do not permit me to be separated from Thee. And I ask the same grace for all who are at present in the state of grace. I put all confidence in Thy promise, that Thou wilt give me perseverance if I continue to ask it from Thee. But I fear that in my temptations I shall neglect to have recourse to Thee, and thus relapse into sin. I therefore ask of Thee the grace never more to neglect prayer. Grant that in the occasions in which I shall be in danger of relapsing, I may recommend myself to Thee, and may invoke the aid of the most Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. O my God, this I

purpose, and this I hope to do with the assistance of Thy grace. Hear me for the sake of Jesus Christ. O Mary, my Mother, obtain for me the grace that in all dangers of losing God, I may have recourse to thee and to thy Son.

Spiritual Reading.

SPES NOSTRA, SALVE—HAIL, OUR HOPE!

XXVIII.—MARY IS THE HOPE OF ALL.

Modern heretics cannot endure that we should salute and call Mary *our hope* : " Hail, our Hope !" They say that God alone is our hope, and that He curses those who put their trust in creatures in these words of the Prophet Jeremias : *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man*—(Jer. xvii. 5). Mary, they exclaim, is a creature ; and how can a creature be *our hope* ? This is what the heretics say : but in spite of this the holy Church obliges all Ecclesiastics and Religious each day to raise their voices, and in the name of all the faithful to invoke and call Mary by the sweet name of " our Hope "—the hope of all.

The angelical Doctor St. Thomas, says that we can place our hope in a person in two ways : as a *principal* cause, and as a *mediate* one. Those who hope for a favour from a king, hope it from him as lord ; they hope for it from his minister or favourite as an intercessor. If the favour is granted, it comes primarily from the king, but it comes through the instrumentality of the favourite ; and in this case he who seeks the favour is right in calling his intercessor his hope. The King of Heaven, being Infinite Goodness, desires in the highest degree to enrich us with His graces ; but because confidence is requisite on our part, and in order to increase it in us, He has given us His own Mother to be our Mother and Advocate, and to her He has

given all power to help us; and therefore He wills that we should repose our hope of salvation and of every blessing in her. Those who place their hopes in creatures alone, independently of God, as sinners do, and in order to obtain the friendship and favour of a man, fear not to outrage His Divine Majesty, are most certainly cursed by God, as the Prophet Jeremias says. But those who hope in Mary, as Mother of God, who is able to obtain graces and eternal life for them, are truly blessed and acceptable to the Heart of God, Who desires to see that greatest of His creatures honoured; for she loved and honoured Him in this world more than all men and Angels put together. And therefore we justly and reasonably call the Blessed Virgin "our Hope," trusting, as Cardinal Bellarmine says, "that we shall obtain through her intercession, that which we should not obtain by our own unaided prayers." "We pray to her," says the learned Suarez, "in order that the dignity of the intercessor may supply for our own unworthiness; so that," he continues, "to implore the Blessed Virgin in such a spirit is not diffidence in the mercy of God, but fear of our own unworthiness."

It is, then, not without reason that the holy Church, in the words of Ecclesiasticus, calls Mary *the mother of holy hope*—(Ecclus. xxiv. 24). She is the Mother who gives birth to holy hope in our hearts; not to the hope of the vain and transitory goods of this life, but of the immense and eternal goods of Heaven.

"Hail, then, O hope of my soul!" exclaims St. Ephrem, addressing this Divine Mother; "hail, O certain salvation of Christians; hail, O helper of sinners; hail, fortress of the faithful and salvation of the world!" Other Saints remind us that, after God, our only Hope is Mary; and therefore they call her, "after God, their only Hope."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XXXIV.—"CHARITY ENVIETH NOT"—HE THAT LOVES JESUS DOES NOT ENVY THE GREAT ONES OF THE WORLD, BUT ONLY THOSE WHO ARE GREATER LOVERS OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Purity of intention is called the heavenly alchemy by which iron is turned into gold; that is to say, the most trivial actions, such as to work, to take one's meals, to take recreation or repose, when done for God, become the gold of holy love. Wherefore St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi believes for certain that those who do all with a pure intention go straight to Paradise, without passing through Purgatory. It is related in the *Spiritual Treasury* that it was the custom of a pious hermit, before setting about any work, to pause a little, and lift his eyes to Heaven; on being questioned why he did so he replied: "I am taking my aim." By which he meant that, as the archer before shooting his arrow takes his aim that he may not miss the mark, so, before each action, he made God his aim, in order that it might be sure of pleasing Him. We should do the same; and even during the performance of our actions it is very good for us from time to time to renew our good intention.

II.

Those who have nothing else in view in their undertakings than the Divine will, enjoy that holy liberty of spirit which belongs to the children of God; and this enables them to embrace everything that pleases Jesus Christ, however repugnant it may be to their own self-love or human respect. The love of Jesus Christ establishes His lovers in a state of total indifference; so that all is the same to them, be it sweet or bitter; they desire nothing for their own pleasure, but all for the pleasure of

God. With the same feelings of peace they address themselves to small and great works; to the pleasant and the unpleasant: it is enough for them if they please God.

The Rogation Days—Tuesday

Morning Meditation.

GOD HAS PLEDGED HIMSELF TO GRANT US SPIRITUAL, NOT TEMPORAL, GOODS.

We can expect to obtain only those graces that we ask in the Name and through the merits of Jesus Christ. "But," says St. Augustine, "if we ask anything hurtful to our salvation it cannot be said to be asked in the Name of the Saviour." When we see that God does not give us temporal gifts, let us be assured that He refuses them only because He loves us, and because He sees that the things we ask would only injure our spiritual well-being.

I.

Consider that our Lord's promise to hear our prayers does not apply to our petitions for *temporal goods*, but only to those for spiritual graces necessary, or at any rate useful, for the salvation of the soul. We can only expect to obtain the graces that we ask in the Name and through the merits of Jesus Christ. "But," as St. Augustine says, "if we ask anything hurtful to our salvation, it cannot be said to be asked in the Name of the Saviour." That which is injurious to salvation cannot be expected from the Saviour; God does not and cannot grant it; and why? Because He loves us. A physician who has regard for a sick man will not permit him to have food which he knows will injure him. And how many people

would be prevented from committing the sins they do commit if they were poor or sick! Many people ask for health or riches, but God does not give them, because He sees they would be an occasion of sinning, or at least of growing lukewarm in His service. So, when we ask these temporal gifts, we ought always to add this condition —*if they are profitable for our souls.* And when we see that God does not give them, let us rest assured that He refuses them only because He loves us, and because He sees that the things we ask would only injure our spiritual well-being.

And often we pray God to deliver us from some troublesome temptation which seeks to induce us to forfeit His grace; but God does not deliver us, in order that our soul may be more closely united in love with Him. It is not temptations or bad thoughts that hurt us, and separate us from God, but consent to evil. When the soul, through the assistance of God's grace, resists a temptation, it makes a great advance in the way of perfection. St. Paul tells us that he was very much troubled with temptations to impurity, and that he prayed God thrice to deliver him from them: *There was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me; for which thing thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me.* And what did the Lord answer? He told him: It is enough to have My grace: *My grace is sufficient for thee*—(2 Cor. xii. 7—9). Thus should we, in the temptations which assault us, pray God to deliver us from them, or at least to help us to resist them. And when we thus pray, we should be quite certain that God is already helping us to resist them: *Thou didst call upon me in affliction, and I delivered thee. I heard thee in the secret place of tempest*—(Ps. lxxx. 8). God often leaves us in the storm for our greater good; but still He hears us in secret, and gives us His grace to strengthen us to resist and to be resigned.

II.

All temporal gifts which are not necessary for salvation ought to be asked conditionally; and if we see that God does not give them, we must feel sure that He

refuses them for our greater good. But with regard to spiritual graces, we must be certain that God gives them to us when we ask Him. St. Teresa says that God loves us more than we love ourselves. And St. Augustine has declared that God has a greater desire to give us His grace than we have to receive it : " He is more willing to bestow His favours upon you than you are desirous of receiving them." And after him, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi has said that God feels a kind of obligation to the soul that prays, and, as it were, says to it : " Soul, I thank thee that thou askest Me for grace." For then the soul gives God an opportunity of doing good to it, and of thus satisfying His desire of giving His grace to all. And how can it ever happen that God will not hear a soul that asks for the things which He most delights to give? When the soul says : " Lord, I ask Thee not for riches, honours, the goods of this world, but I only beg for Thy grace. Deliver me from sin; give me a good death; give me Paradise; give me Thy love," which is the grace that, as St. Francis de Sales says, we ought to pray for above all others, " give me resignation to Thy will "—when the soul prays thus, how is it possible that God should refuse to hear it? And what prayers, O my God, wilt Thou ever hear, asks St. Augustine, if Thou hearest not those that are made as Thou wishest them to be made : " If Thou hearest not these, what dost thou hear?" And St. Bernard says that when we ask for spiritual graces of this kind, the desire of obtaining them can only come to us from God Himself; so the Saint turns to God, and says to Him : " Wherefore hast Thou given the desire unless Thou art willing to satisfy it?" But above all, the words of Jesus Christ should revive our confidence, when we are praying for spiritual graces : *If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask him?* —(Luke xi. 13). If you, who are full of evil and of self-love, are unable to refuse your children the good things which they ask, how much more will your heavenly Father, Who loves you more than any earthly father can

love his family, grant you His spiritual gifts, when you ask Him for them?

Let us pray, then, and be ever praying, if we wish to be saved. Let prayer be our most delightful occupation; let prayer be the exercise of our whole life. And when we are praying for particular graces, let us never forget to ask for the grace to continue to pray; because if we ever leave off praying we shall be lost. There is nothing easier than prayer. It costs us little to say: Lord, stand by me! Lord, assist me! Lord, give me Thy love! and the like. What can be easier than this? But if we do not do so we cannot be saved. Let us pray, then, and let us always shelter ourselves under the intercession of Mary: "Let us seek for grace, and let us seek it through Mary," says St. Bernard. And when we recommend ourselves to Mary, let us be sure that she hears us and obtains for us whatever we want. The same Saint says: "Neither the means nor the will can be wanting to her." And St. Augustine thus addresses her: "Remember, O most pious Lady, that it has never been heard that any one who fled to thy protection was forsaken." Ah, no, says St. Bonaventure, he who invokes Mary, finds salvation; and therefore he calls her "the salvation of those who invoke her." Let us, then, in our prayers always invoke Jesus and Mary; and let us never neglect to pray.

Eternal Father, I humbly adore Thee, and thank Thee for having created me, and for having redeemed me through Jesus Christ. I thank Thee most sincerely for having made me a Christian, by giving me the true Faith, and by adopting me as Thy child in the Sacrament of Baptism. I thank Thee for having, after the numberless sins I had committed, waited for my repentance, and for having pardoned, as I humbly hope, all the offences I have offered to Thee, and for which I am now sincerely sorry, because They have been displeasing to Thee, Who art infinite goodness. I thank Thee for having preserved me from so many relapses, of which I would have been guilty if Thou hadst not protected me. But my enemies still continue, and will continue till death, to combat against me, and to endeavour

to make me their slave. If Thou dost not constantly guard and succour me with Thy aid, I, a miserable creature, shall return to sin, and shall certainly lose Thy grace. I beseech Thee, then, for the love of Jesus Christ, to grant me holy perseverance unto death. Jesus, Thy Son has promised that Thou wilt grant whatsoever we ask in His Name. Through the merits, then, of Jesus Christ, I beg, for myself and for all the just, the grace never again to be separated from Thy love, but to love Thee forever, in time and eternity. Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Spiritual Reading.

SPES NOSTRA, SALVE—HAIL, OUR HOPE!

XXIX.—MARY IS THE HOPE OF ALL.

St. Ephrem, reflecting on the present order of Providence, by which God wills that all who are saved should be saved by the means of Mary, thus addresses her : " O Lady, cease not to watch over us ; preserve and guard us under the wings of thy compassion and mercy, for, after God, we have no hope but in thee." St. Thomas of Villanova repeats the same thing, calling her : " our only refuge, help, and asylum." St. Bernard seems to give the reason for this when he says : " See, O man, the designs of God—designs by which He is able to dispense His mercy more abundantly to us; for, desiring to redeem the whole human race, He has placed the whole price of redemption in the hands of Mary, that she may dispense it at will."

In the book of Exodus we read that God commanded Moses to make a mercy-seat of purest gold, because it was thence that He would speak to him : *Thou shalt make also a propitiatory of the purest gold . . . Thence will I give orders, and will speak to thee*—(Exod. xxv. 17, 22). St. Andrew of Crete says that "the whole world embraces Mary as being this propitiatory." And, commenting on his words, a pious author exclaims : " Thou, O Mary,

art the propitiatory of the whole world. From thee does our most compassionate Lord speak to our hearts; from thee He speaks words of pardon and mercy; from thee He bestows His gifts; from thee all good flows to us." And therefore, before the Divine Word took flesh in the womb of Mary, God sent an Archangel to ask her consent: because He willed that the world should receive the Incarnate Word through her, and that she should be the source of every good. Hence St. Irenæus remarks that as Eve was seduced by a fallen angel to flee from God, so Mary was led to receive God into her womb, obeying a good Angel; and thus by her obedience repaired Eve's disobedience, and became her advocate, and that of the whole human race. "If Eve disobeyed God, yet Mary was persuaded to obey God, that the Virgin Mary might become the advocate of the virgin Eve. And as the human race was bound to death through a virgin, it is saved through a Virgin." And Blessed Raymond Jordano also says that "every good, every help, every grace that men have received and will receive from God until the end of time came, and will come to them by the intercession and through the hands of Mary."

The devout Blosius, then, might well exclaim: "O Mary, thou who art so loving and gracious towards all who love thee, tell me, who can be so infatuated and unfortunate as not to love thee? Thou, in the midst of their doubts and difficulties, enlightenest the minds of all who, in their afflictions, have recourse to thee. Thou encouragest those who fly to thee in time of danger; thou succourest those who call upon thee; thou, after thy Divine Son, art the certain salvation of thy faithful servants. Hail, then, O hope of those who are in despair; O succour of those who are abandoned. O Mary, thou art all-powerful, for thy Divine Son, to honour thee, complies instantly with all thy desires."

Evening Meditation.

THE PRACTICE OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST.

XXXV.—" CHARITY ENVIETH NOT "—HE THAT LOVES JESUS CHRIST DOES NOT ENVY THE GREAT ONES OF THE WORLD, BUT ONLY THOSE WHO ARE GREATER LOVERS OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

Many, on the other hand, are willing to serve God, but it must be in such an employment, in such a place, with such companions, or under such circumstances, or else they either quit the work or do it with a bad grace. Such persons have not freedom of spirit, but are slaves of self-love; and on that account gain very little merit by what they do : they lead a troubled life, because the yoke of Jesus Christ becomes a burden to them. The true lovers of Jesus Christ care only to do what pleases Him; and for the reason that it pleases Him, when He wills, and where He wills, and in the manner He wills, and whether He wishes to employ them in a state of life honoured by the world or in a life of obscurity and insignificance. This is what is meant by loving Jesus with a pure love; and in this we ought to exercise ourselves, battling against the craving of our self-love, which would urge us to seek important and honourable functions, and such as suit our inclinations.

I love Thee, my Jesus; I love Thee with all my soul; I love Thee more than myself, O true and only Lover of my soul; for what friend but Thee has ever sacrificed his life for me? I weep to think that I have been so ungrateful to Thee. Unhappy that I am! I was already lost; but I trust that by Thy grace Thou hast restored me to life. And this shall be my life, to love Thee always, my Sovereign Good. Make me love Thee, O infinite love, and I ask Thee for nothing more! O Mary, my Mother, accept me for thy servant, and gain acceptance for me with Jesus thy Son.

II.

We must, moreover, be detached from all exercises, even spiritual ones, when the Lord wishes us to be occupied in other works of His good pleasure. One day, Father Alvarez, finding himself surrounded with business, was anxious to get rid of it in order to go and pray, because it seemed to him that during that time he was not with God, but our Lord then said to him : " Though I do not keep thee with Me, let it suffice thee that I make use of thee." This is a profitable lesson for those who are sometimes disturbed at being obliged, by obedience or by charity, to leave their accustomed devotions; let them be assured that such disturbances on these and like occasions do not come from God, but either from the devil or from self-love. "Give pleasure to God, and die." This is the grand maxim of the Saints.

O my Eternal God, I offer Thee my whole heart; but what sort of heart, O God, is it I offer Thee? A heart created, indeed, to love Thee; but which, instead of loving Thee, has so many times rebelled against Thee. But behold, my Jesus, if there was a time when my heart rebelled against Thee, now it is deeply grieved and penitent for the displeasure it has given Thee. Yes, my dear Redeemer, I am sorry for having despised Thee; and I am determined to do all to obey Thee, and to love Thee at every cost. Oh, draw me wholly to Thy love; do this for the sake of the love which made Thee die for me on the Cross.

The Rogation Days—Wednesday

(25th May).

Morning Meditation.

THE LIFE OF POVERTY JESUS LED UPON EARTH.

The world teaches its followers that happiness consists in the possession of riches, pleasures, and honours; but

this deceitful world was condemned by the Son of God when He became Man. *Now is the judgment of the world*—(John xii. 31). This condemnation began in the Stable of Bethlehem. Jesus Christ wished to be born there in poverty, that through His poverty we might become rich, and from His Divine example pluck out of our hearts all affections for earthly possessions.

I.

It was ordained by God that at the time when His Son was born on this earth the decree of the Emperor should be promulgated obliging everyone to go and enroll himself in the place of his birth. And thus it happened that Joseph had to go with his spouse to Bethlehem to enroll himself according to the decree of Cæsar. And now, the time of her delivery having arrived, Mary having been driven from the other houses, and even from the common asylum of the poor, was obliged to remain that night in a cave, and there brought forth the King of Heaven. It is true that, if Jesus had been born at Nazareth, He would equally have been born in a state of poverty; but then He would at least have had a dry room, a little fire, warm clothes, and a more comfortable cradle. But no, He chose to be born in this cold cavern without a fire to warm Him; He chose to have a manger for a cradle, and a little prickly straw for a bed, in order that He might suffer more.

Let us, then, enter into the cave of Bethlehem; but let us enter there with Faith. If we go there without Faith we shall see nothing but a poor infant who moves us to compassion at beholding one so beautiful, shivering and crying with cold and with the pricking of the straw on which he lies. But if we enter it with Faith, and consider that this Child is the Son of God, Who for the love of us has come down to this earth and suffered so much to pay the penalty of our sins, how can it be possible not to thank Him and love Him?

O my sweet Infant, how is it possible that, knowing how much Thou hast suffered for me, I can have been so ungrateful to Thee, and have offended Thee so often! But these tears which Thou sheddest, this poverty Thou

hast chosen for the love of me, make me hope for the pardon of all the offences I have committed against Thee. I repent, my Jesus, of having so often turned my back upon Thee; and I love Thee above all things, my God and my All! My God, from this day forth Thou shalt be my only Treasure and my only Good. I will say to Thee, with St. Ignatius of Loyola, "Give me Thy love, give me Thy grace, and I am rich enough." I wish for, and desire nothing else. Thou alone art sufficient for me, my Jesus, my Life, my Love.

II.

After the example of our Saviour the Saints sought to despoil themselves of everything, and in poverty to follow Jesus Christ Who was Himself poor. St. Bernard says: "The poverty of Christ is richer than all the world's treasures." It animates us in acquiring the riches of Heaven and in despising those of the world. St. Paul wrote: *I count all things but as dung that I may gain Christ*—(Phil. iii. 8). Compared with the grace of Jesus Christ the Apostle considered everything else as mere dung and filth. St. Francis Borgia abandons all his wealth for a life of poverty in the Society of Jesus. St. Francis of Assisi gave back even his very shirt to his father that he might live all his life like a poor beggar. He who covets possessions, said St. Philip Neri, will never become a Saint. And so it is; for the heart that is full of this world has no room for Divine love. Dost thou bring an empty heart? was a question the monks of old asked of those who came to join them. They meant to say: If thou dost not bring an empty heart thou canst never belong entirely to God. *For where thy treasure is there is thy heart also*—(Matt. vi. 21). Each one's treasure is what he loves and prizes. Once when a certain rich man died St. Anthony of Padua published his damnation from the pulpit; and as a sign of the truth of what he said he told the people to go to the place where he had kept his money, and that there they would find the wretched man's heart. They did go, and they actually found his heart, still warm, in the midst of his money.

Happy is the man who can say with St. Paulinus: "Let the rich enjoy their riches and kings their kingdoms; Christ is my possession, my kingdom, and my glory." "Give me Thy love together with Thy grace and I am rich enough," said St. Ignatius. Let us never fail to have recourse to Mary, the Divine Mother, and love her after God above all things. She enriches with graces all who love her. *With me are riches . . . that I may enrich them that love me*—(Prov. viii. 18, 21).

O my infant God, I see Thee trembling with cold on the straw, crying and weeping for my sake—oh, how can I live without loving Thee? O my God, how could I have offended Thee so much, knowing, as I did by Faith how much Thou hast suffered for me. But this straw that torments Thee, this vile manger in which Thou art lying, those loving tears Thou shedest, those tender cries Thou dost utter—all make me firmly hope for pardon and for the grace to love Thee for the rest of my life. I love Thee, O Divine Child! I give myself all to Thee. O Mary, great Mother of this great Son, and most beloved by Him, pray to Him for me.

Spiritual Reading.

SPES NOSTRA, SALVE—HAIL, OUR HOPE!

XXX.—MARY IS THE HOPE OF ALL.

St. Germanus, recognising in Mary the source of all our good, and that she delivers us from every evil, thus invokes her: "O, my sovereign Lady, thou alone art the one whom God has appointed to be my solace here below; thou art the guide of my pilgrimage, the strength of my weakness, the riches of my poverty, remedy for the healing of my wounds, the relief of my pains, the end of my captivity, the hope of my salvation! Hear my prayers, have pity on my tears, I conjure thee, O thou who art my Queen, my refuge, my love, my help, my hope and my strength."

We need not, then, be surprised that St. Antoninus

applies the following verse of the Book of Wisdom to Mary : *Now all good things came to me together with her*—(Wisd. vii. 11). For as this Blessed Virgin is the Mother and dispenser of all good things, the whole world, and more particularly each individual who lives in it as a devout client of this great Queen, may say with truth that, with devotion to Mary, both he and the world have obtained everything good and perfect. The Saint thus expresses his thought : " She is the Mother of all good things; and the world can truly say that, with her, it has received all good things." And hence the Blessed Abbot of Celles expressly declares that " when we find Mary, we find all good." Whoever finds Mary finds every good thing, obtains all graces and all virtues; for by her powerful intercession she obtains all that is necessary to enrich him with Divine grace. In the Book of Proverbs Mary herself tells us that she possesses all the riches of God, that is to say, His mercies, that she may dispense them in favour of her lovers : *With me are riches . . . and glorious riches . . . that I may enrich them that love me*—(Prov. viii. 18, 21). And therefore St. Bonaventure says that " We ought all to keep our eyes constantly fixed on Mary's hands, that through them we may receive the graces we desire."

Oh, how many who were once proud have become humble by devotion to Mary ! How many who were passionate have become meek ! How many in the midst of darkness have found light ! How many who were in despair have found confidence ! How many who were lost have found salvation by the same powerful means ! And this she clearly foretold in the house of Elizabeth, in her own sublime canticle : *Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed*—(Luke i. 48). And St. Bernard, interpreting her words, says : " All generations call thee blessed, because thou hast given life and glory to all nations; for in thee sinners find pardon, and the just perseverance in the grace of God."

Evening Meditation.

THE HAPPY DEATH OF GOD'S SERVANTS.

I.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints—(Ps. cxv. 15). St. Bernard says that the death of the just is called precious, because it is the end of labour and the gate of life. To the Saints death is a reward, because it is the end of sufferings, pains, struggles, and the fear of losing God.

That word Depart, which is such a terror to worldlings, alarms not the just; because to them it is not painful to leave all worldly goods, for God has been their only riches: nor honours, for they have despised them: nor relatives, for they have loved them only in God. Hence, as they frequently repeated in life, so now with redoubled joy do they exclaim in death: *My God and my All!*

Nor do the pains of death afflict them; they rejoice in offering to God the last moments of life in testimony of their love for Him, uniting the sacrifice of their lives to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ offered on the Cross, for the love of them.

Oh, what a consolation for the Saints is the thought that now the time is over when they might have offended God, and were in constant danger of losing Him! Oh, what joy to be able then to embrace the Crucifix, and to say: *In peace, in the self same, I will sleep and I will rest!*—(Ps. iv. 9). The devil will endeavour at that time to disquiet us by the sight of our sins; but if we have bewailed them, and have loved Jesus Christ with our whole heart, Jesus will console us. God is more desirous of our salvation than the devil is for our perdition.

Moreover, death is the gate of life. God is faithful, and will indeed at that time console those who have loved Him. Even in the sorrows of death He will bestow upon them a foretaste of Heaven. Their acts of

confidence, of love of God, of desire soon to behold Him, will be the beginning for them of that peace which they will enjoy throughout eternity. What joy, in particular, will the holy Viaticum afford to those who can say, with St. Philip Neri : *Behold my Love! Behold my Love!*

II.

We should therefore fear, not *death*, but *sin*, which alone makes death so terrible. A great servant of God, Father Colombiere, said : " It is morally impossible for one who in life has been faithful to God to die an unhappy death."

He who loves God is desirous of death, which will unite him eternally to God. It is a sign of but little love for God, not to desire soon to behold Him.

Let us be resigned to the hour of death and the loss of all worldly possessions. We may do this now meritoriously, but then it must be done forcibly and with danger of being lost. Let us live as though every day were to be the last of our lives. Oh, how well does he live who lives always with the remembrance of death present to his mind!

O my God, when will the day arrive in which I shall see Thee and love Thee face to face? I do not deserve it; but Thy Wounds, O my Redeemer, are my hope. I will say to Thee with St. Bernard : *Thy Wounds are my merits.* And hence I will take confidence, and will also says to Thee with St. Augustine : *May I die, O Lord, that I may behold Thee!* O Mary, my Mother, in the Blood of Jesus Christ, and in thy holy intercession, do I hope to be saved, and to come to praise thee, thank thee, and love thee forever in Heaven.

Feast of the Ascension

Morning Meditation.

"ARISE, O LORD, INTO THY RESTING-PLACE."

In the Ascension of our Blessed Lord we contemplate how, forty days after His Resurrection, He ascended into Heaven in triumph, surrounded by great glory, in the sight of His holy Mother and His disciples. *Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates; and the King of glory shall enter in*—(Ps. xxiii. 7). O Paradise! O Paradise! When, O Lord, shall I see Thee face to face, and embrace Thee, without fear of ever losing Thee?

I.

The rightful home of the risen Saviour was Heaven, the home of the Blessed, but Jesus wished to remain still on earth for forty days, appearing again and again to His disciples before He ascended into Heaven, in order to strengthen their Faith in His Resurrection and to give them consolation and hope. Meanwhile the Angels ardently desired to have their King in their heavenly country, and hence they were continually supplicating Him in the words of David: *Arise, O Lord, into thy resting-place*—(Ps. cxxxi. 8). Come, O Lord, come quickly, now that Thou hast redeemed men: come to Thy kingdom and dwell with us.

Behold now the solemn hour has arrived and our Blessed Saviour ascends Mount Olivet with His Apostles and disciples to about the number of one hundred and twenty. Then, raising His hands to Heaven, Jesus blesses them and ascends into the skies in triumph, surrounded by great glory. When a monarch makes his

solemn entry into his kingdom, he does not pass through the gates of his capital city, for they are removed to make way for him on the occasion. Hence, when Jesus Christ now enters Paradise, the Angels cry out : *Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in*—(Ps. xxiii. 7).

O Paradise ! O Paradise ! When, O Lord, shall I see Thee face to face, and embrace Thee, without fear of ever losing Thee ?

II.

Before Jesus Christ died for us, Paradise was closed; but to-day Thou dost mount the skies, O Lord, leading a glorious number of captives, all the multitude of blessed souls who have come forth from Limbo, and ascend to Heaven with Thee. *Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive*—(Ps. lxvii. 19). By His death and glorious ascension to-day into Heaven our Saviour has opened Paradise for all who love Him.

Ah, how lamentable, that after all Jesus has suffered to win the Kingdom of Heaven for men, so many foolish sinners should renounce it for worthless pleasures, for a mere nothing, and exchange the bliss of Heaven for the torments of hell !

Through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Mediator, we have received in Baptism grace to become the sons of God, *and if sons, heirs also, heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ* : but St. Paul adds : *yet so if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him* —(Rom. viii. 17). The Apostle then exhorts us all to suffer with courage, strengthened by the hope of Paradise : *For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come which shall be revealed in us*—(Rom. viii. 18). No beggar is so foolish as not gladly to exchange his rags for a great kingdom.

O my Jesus, when I look upon my sins I am ashamed to seek for Paradise, but when I look on Thee upon the Cross I cannot cease to hope for Heaven, knowing, as I do, that Thou didst die to atone for my sins and

obtain Paradise for me. Ah, my Jesus, when will the day arrive that shall free me from all danger of losing Thee? O Mary, Queen of Heaven, thy intercession is all-powerful with God. In thee I put my trust.

Spiritual Reading.

SPES NOSTRA, SALVE—HAIL, OUR HOPE!

XXXI.—MARY IS THE HOPE OF ALL.

The devout Lanspergius makes our Lord thus address the world : " Men, poor children of Adam, who live surrounded by so many enemies and in the midst of so many trials, endeavour to honour My Mother and yours in a special manner : for I have given Mary to the world that she may be your model, and that from her you may learn to lead good lives; and also that she may be a refuge to which you can fly in all you afflictions and trials. I have made this, My Daughter, such that no one need fear or have the least repugnance to have recourse to her; and for this purpose I have created her of so benign and compassionate a disposition that she knows not how to despise any one who takes refuge with her, nor can she deny her favour to anyone who seeks it. The mantle of her mercy is open to all, and she allows no one to leave her feet without consoling him." May the immense goodness of our God be ever praised and blessed for having given us this so great, so tender, so loving a Mother and Advocate.

O God, how tender are the sentiments of confidence expressed by the enamoured St. Bonaventure towards Jesus our most loving Redeemer, and Mary our most loving Advocate! He says : "Whatever God foresees to be my lot, I know that He cannot refuse Himself to anyone who loves Him and seeks for Him with his whole heart. I will embrace Him with my love; and if He does not bless me, I will still cling to Him so closely that He will be unable to go without me. If I can do nothing else, at least I will hide myself in His Wounds,

and, taking up my dwelling there, it will be in Himself alone that He will find me." And the Saint concludes: "If my Redeemer rejects me on account of my sins, and drives me from His sacred feet, I will cast myself at those of His beloved Mother Mary, and there I will remain prostrate until she has obtained my forgiveness; for this Mother of mercy knows not, and has never known, how to do otherwise than compassionate the miserable, and comply with the desires of the most destitute who fly to her for succour; and therefore, if not by duty, at least by compassion, she will engage her Son to pardon me."

"Look down upon us, then," let us exclaim, in the words of Euthymius, "look down upon us, O most compassionate Mother; cast thine eyes of mercy on us, for we are thy servants, and in thee we have placed all our confidence."

Evening Meditation.

THE JOY OF THE BLESSED IN HEAVEN IS TO SEE AND LOVE GOD.

I.

Let us consider what it is in Heaven that makes its holy citizens completely happy. The soul in Heaven sees God face to face, and knowing His infinite beauty and all the perfections that render Him worthy of infinite love, cannot but love Him with all its powers, and love Him far more than itself. Nay, as it were forgetting itself, the soul thinks of nothing but to see Him happy Who is its Beloved and its God; and seeing that God, the only object of its affections, enjoys infinite happiness, this happiness of God constitutes all its Paradise. If a soul were capable of anything infinite, its own joy would also be infinite in seeing that its Beloved is infinitely happy, but as a creature is not capable of infinite joy, it is at least so satiated with joy that it desires nothing more. And this is that satisfaction that David sighed

for when he said : *I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear*—(Ps. xvi. 15).

Thus also is fulfilled what God says to the soul when He admits it into Paradise : *Enter into the joy of thy Lord*—(Matt. xxv. 21). He does not bid the joy enter into the soul, because this, His joy, being infinite, cannot be contained in the creature; but He bids the soul enter into His joy, that it may receive a portion of it, and such a portion as will satisfy it and fill it with delight.

Therefore, in our prayer, among all acts of love towards God, there is none more perfect than the taking delight in the infinite happiness God enjoys. This is certainly the continual exercise of the Blessed in Heaven; so that he who often rejoices in the joy of God begins in this life to do that which he hopes to do in Heaven through all eternity.

The love of God with which the Saints in Paradise burn is such, that if ever a fear of losing it were to enter their thoughts, or they were to think that they should not love Him with all their powers, as now they love Him, this fear would cause them to experience the anguish of hell. But no; for they are as sure, as they are sure of God, that they will ever love Him with all their powers, and that they will be ever loved by God, and this mutual love will never change throughout eternity. O my God, make me worthy of this, through the merits of Jesus Christ.

II.

This happiness, which constitutes Paradise, will be further increased by the splendour of that delightful city of God, the beauty of its inhabitants, and by their companionship, especially by that of the Queen of all, Mary, who will appear fairer than all, and by that of Jesus Christ, Whose beauty again will infinitely surpass that of Mary.

The joy of the Blessed will be increased by the knowledge of the many dangers to salvation which they all passed through in this life. What, then, will be the thanksgivings offered to God by those who, through their own sins, deserved hell, and now find themselves

there on high, when they see so many sinners condemned to hell for less sins than their own, while they are saved, and sure of not losing God, and destined to enjoy eternally those boundless delights of Heaven, of which they will never grow weary. In this life, however great and continual be our joys, with time they always weary us; but as for the delights of Paradise, the more they are enjoyed the more they are desired; and thus the Blessed are ever satisfied and filled with these delights, and ever desire them; they ever desire them, and ever obtain them. Wherefore that sweet song with which the Saints praise God and thank Him for the happiness He has given them, is called a *new song* : *Sing to the Lord a new song* —(Ps. xcvii. 1). It is called *new*, because the rejoicings of Heaven seem ever new, as though they were experienced for the first time; and thus they ever rejoice in them, and ever long for them; and, while they ever long for them, they ever enjoy them. Thus, as the damned are called " vessels of wrath "—*vasa irae*—the Blessed are called " vessels of divine love "—*vasa charitatis*.

Justly, then, does St. Augustine say that to obtain this eternal blessedness there ought to be eternal labour. Hence it was little the anchorites did with all their penitential works and prayers to gain Heaven : it was little for the Saints to leave their riches and kingdoms to gain Paradise; little that so many Martyrs suffered, enduring racks and burning irons and cruel deaths to win Paradise.

Let us at least suffer joyfully the crosses God sends, for they will procure for us everlasting bliss. When pains, infirmities, or other adversities afflict us, let us lift our eyes to Heaven and say : *One day all these sorrows will end and I hope after that to enjoy God for ever!* Let us endure everything; let us despise all created things. Jesus awaits us, and stands with the crown in His hands to make us kings in Heaven.

But, O my Jesus, how can I aspire to so great a good —I who have so often, for the miserable pleasures of earth, renounced Paradise and trodden Thy grace underfoot? Yet, Thy Blood gives me courage to hope for Paradise though I have so often deserved hell. I hope

for it because Thou hast died upon the Cross in order to bestow Paradise upon those who have not deserved it. O my Redeemer and my God, I resolve never more to lose Thee. Thy Kingdom come! Through the merits of Thy Blood grant me to enter Thy Kingdom one day, and meantime enable me perfectly to fulfil Thy will which is the greatest good and a Paradise on earth for all who love Thee.

O ye who love God, while we live in this valley of tears, let us sigh for Paradise—

To there behold and love our God!
When will that wished-for dawn arise?
While now I cry, 'twixt smiles and tears,
Ah, when? ah, when shall end my fears?
O Paradise! O Paradise!

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In honour of Our Blessed Lady.

Most holy Immaculate Virgin and my Mother Mary, to thee, who art the Mother of my Lord, and Queen of the world, the advocate, the hope, the refuge of sinners, I have recourse to-day—I, who am the most miserable of all. I render thee my most humble homage, O great Queen, and I thank thee for all the graces thou hast conferred on me until now, particularly for having delivered me from hell, which I have so often deserved. I love thee, O most amiable Lady; and for the love which I bear thee, I promise to serve thee always, and to do all in my power to make others love thee also. I place in thee all my hopes; I confide my salvation to thy care. Accept me for thy servant, and receive me under thy mantle, O Mother of Mercy. And since thou art so powerful with God, deliver me from all temptations, or rather obtain me the strength to triumph over them until death. Of thee I ask a perfect love for Jesus Christ. From thee I hope to die a good death. O my Mother, by the love which thou bearest to God, I beseech thee to help me all times, but especially at the last moment of my life. Leave me not, I beseech thee, until thou seest me safe in Heaven, blessing thee, and singing thy mercies for all eternity.

Amen. So. I hope. So may it it be.

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